

Strategic Culture of Small States

The Case of ASEAN

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to theorize small state strategic culture with special reference to the attitude of the ASEAN states toward institutionalizing regional cooperative security architectures. The quantitative case studies show that in small states where historically rooted strategic preferences may be limited, material influences and situational considerations take precedence over ideational factors in the making of the state's strategic culture. Second, the content of small state strategic culture focuses primarily on foreign and security policy issues that originate in their neighborhood. Lastly, Small states' threat perceptions from the neighborhood over time dictate the formation of strategic culture (provocative vs. cooperative). The qualitative case studies demonstrate that small Southeast Asian states (Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia) exhibit a higher tendency for conflict. Multilateral cooperation is at best selective. Bilateral means is still the preferred policy approach when dealing with other states. This dissertation concludes with a pessimistic remark on the prospects for the development and maturation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community. At its current stage, the APSC appears to be a policy instrument created only to reinforce ASEAN's centrality in charting the region's security architecture. This is no small accomplishment in itself nonetheless.

## DEDICATION

To my parents,  
Hung-Chi Kao and Shu-Mei Kao,  
for their endless love and support.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

While the initiation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 marks the latest chapter in the development of an ASEAN Economic Community, tangible efforts to deepen defense and security cooperation among ASEAN states remain fairly limited. Ongoing discussions about some forms of cooperative security either as a less costly alternative or a supplement to individual national military buildups reflect region-wide concern about the potential destabilizing effect that a transitory balance of power may have on regional security.<sup>1</sup> The slow progress in institutionalizing any security regime since its inception led observers to claim that “[t]he ASEAN Regional Forum was never intended to provide a means for conflict-management nor should it be depended upon to do so.”<sup>2</sup> Thus far, the vision for an ASEAN Political-Security Community with the goals of political development, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution, to name just a few, also remains in blueprint stage.<sup>3</sup> If any unilateral attempt at security seeking runs the danger of a security dilemma which may easily worsen the already fragile intramural trust among

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<sup>1</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, “The Limits of Defence and Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 33, no. 1 (1998), 62-75.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick M. Cronin and Emily T. Metzgar “ASEAN and Regional Security,” *Strategic Forum* 85 (October 1996): 4.

<sup>3</sup> The ASEAN Political-Security Community is one part of a larger project to create an ASEAN Community. Other divisions of the project include the construction of an ASEAN Economic Community and an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. Consult the ASEAN web portal for details, <http://www.asean.org>.

ASEAN states, if not rapidly degenerate into a regional arms race, why are ASEAN members still reluctant to see the emergence of any concrete cooperative security architecture in the region?

### Cooperative Security

Since the coinage of the term in the 1988 Pacific Basin Symposium, the concept of cooperative security have been interpreted and defined in different ways in different times.<sup>4</sup> The concept, however, gained wider provenance in the Asia-Pacific after its reference in the North Pacific Co-operative Security Dialogue (NPCSD), launched in 1990 by President Mulroney of Canada. The rationale for holding a region-wide forum was to fashion a new security arrangement to replace the World War II mode of defence and deterrence based on bipolarity.

According to Dewitt and Acharya, the three fundamental elements of cooperative security discussed in NPCSD consist of inclusivity, the habit of dialogue, and cooperative actions.<sup>5</sup> First, the element of inclusivity recognizes the role both state and non-state actors, especially international organizations, can play in providing and enhancing security. Here, a broader conceptualization of

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<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive review on the conceptual evolution of the term, see David H. Capie and Paul M. Evans, *The Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 98-107.

<sup>5</sup> David B. Dewitt and Amitav Acharya, *Cooperative Security and Developmental Assistance: the Relationship between Security and Development with Reference to Eastern Asia* (North York, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto - York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1996).

“security” is adopted to include not only traditional security issues such as militarized inter-state disputes but also the increasingly prevalent non-traditional security concerns such as developmental issues and transnational crimes. Although the term “human security” was not specifically referred to in the forum, it has later become a standard component of cooperative security.

Second, any arrangement for cooperative security begins with dialogues, the habit of dialogue between participants in particular. States should take part in carrying out routine discussions, bilateral and multilateral, regarding shared security concerns and the best approaches available to address these concerns. Over time, the habit of dialogue may bring about openness, transparency, reassurance, and predictability while minimizing potential conflict due to misunderstanding. Lastly, the concept of cooperative security highlights the fact that many contemporary security problems cannot be solved by any one state alone. As its name suggests, cooperative actions are required among affected states (and non-state actors) to ameliorate security issues facing all members. In sum, the three ideals of cooperative security present an alternative to balance of power practice as well as a basis for the “rejection of ‘deterrence mind-sets’ associated with great power geopolitics of the Cold War.”<sup>6</sup>

Two other security related concepts often appear in tandem with cooperative security, if not used interchangeably. Some distinction here is necessary to avoid confusion. The development of cooperative security owes

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<sup>6</sup> Amitav Acharya, “Reordering Asia: Cooperative Security or concert of Powers?” *IDSS Working Paper 3* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, July 1999), 8.

much of its origin to the concept of comprehensive security. Comprehensive security is also a post World War II attempt to better appreciate new security challenges beyond security considerations based on bipolar rivalries. Specifically, it entails at the same time an outward focus on the external community at large (geoeconomics and ecopolitics) and an inward shift from state to individual citizen (human development).<sup>7</sup> The dual shifts converge to provide the comprehensive security that one needs to feel secure. The twofold conceptual stretch up and down the ladder of unit of analysis (state to community and state to individual) expands the hitherto state-centric focus in security studies. The globalization discourse further extends this conceptual stretch “intermestically” to juxtapose individual security alongside the wellbeing of state and community, taking into consideration that increasing number of new threats that crop up at the intersection of internal and external security domains, and the calculation of relative capability is ever more complex and non-linear.<sup>8</sup>

ASEAN states were quite receptive to the notion of comprehensive security. For example, Malaysia had adapted and enshrined the doctrine of comprehensive security (three pillars) into its security policy as early as 1984:

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<sup>7</sup> James Hsiung, *Comprehensive Security: Challenge for Pacific Asia* (University of Indianapolis, IN: University of Indianapolis Press, 2004), 3-11.

<sup>8</sup> Victor Cha, “Globalization and the Study of International Security,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 3 (2000): 391-403.

The first is a need to ensure a secure Southeast Asia. The second is to ensure a strong and effective ASEAN community. The third, and most basic, is the necessity to ensure Malaysia is sound, secure, and strong within.<sup>9</sup>

More importantly, comprehensive security shares with cooperative security the assumption that an increase in security in some participating states should not be detrimental to others as security is inextricably interrelated while acknowledging the fact that the security interest of each individual state may differ (ergo their commitment to the security regime)<sup>10</sup>. The zero-sum calculus typically associated with the realist security dilemma appears somewhat anachronistic. Both comprehensive and cooperative security tap into the heart of the neo-neo debate over cooperation and the utility of institutions: it is not about how much cooperation there is, but how much is possible.<sup>11</sup> However sophisticated, comprehensive security remains at best a conceptual approach from which researchers and policy elites contemplate new sources of “insecurity.”<sup>12</sup> It does not devise concrete methods to achieve the goals and objectives prescribed by the concept.

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<sup>9</sup> “Speech Given in Singapore by Deputy Minister Musa Hitam on 2 March, 1984,” cited in *Foreign Affairs Malaysia* 17, no. 1 (March 1984): 97.

<sup>10</sup> Kees Homan, “European Views on Comprehensive Security,” in *Comprehensive Security In Asia: Views From Asia and the West On A Changing Security Environment*, eds. Kurt W. Radtke and Raymond Feddema (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 430.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Jervis, “Realism, Neorealism, and Cooperation,” *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999), 42-63.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph A. Camilleri, *Regionalism in the New Asia Pacific Order* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003), 309.

Other than comprehensive security, cooperative security is often paired with collective security. Collective security is best understood as “the function of a legal order” regarding some collective reaction against “aggression,” however defined.<sup>13</sup> The degree and extent of collective reaction depend on the severity and gravity of the said aggression. The League of Nations Covenant and arguably the resolutions of United Nations Security Council best exemplify the utilization of collective security. Unlike cooperative security or comprehensive security, either of which aims at preventing “insecurity” from arising or aggravating, collective security takes a “reactive approach” to tackle a specific problem, the delict.<sup>14</sup> In general, a delict is a willful wrong, typically with malignity, that inflicts some damage to others. The malign intension of the transgression gives rise to a legal obligation for all the responsible parties to make reparation. The legal order, as agreed upon by participating members, may explicitly contain sanction, be it economic and/or military, against the aggressor. The goal is not to deter but to punish the perpetrator, though the existence of the legal order itself may carry the force to later discourage others from committing a similar crime. The deliberate attempt at eschewing sanctions is what distinguishes cooperative security from collective security.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hans Kelsen, *Collective Security under International Law* (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange Ltd., 2001), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ralf Emmers, “Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific,” in *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, eds. See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (New York: M.E. Sharp, 2004), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ralf Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 4.

## Cooperative Security and ASEAN

The Dewitt and Acharya definition of cooperative security largely resonates with the vision and goals of the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Political-Security Community. When applied specifically to the current Southeast Asian setting, Emmers adds that cooperative security allows for a slow and gradual institutionalization of security relations. Moreover, even at its maturation, a cooperative security regime should not be expected to replace the existing bilateral relations as well as to depose the narrow focus on, if not fear of, military security of certain states.<sup>16</sup>

While the habit of dialogue is seen in various Track I and Track II activities, the ARF purposely shies away from the inclusion of non-state actors as a way to uphold the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference in states' internal affairs, the so called ASEAN way. The state-centric ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, while emphasizing regional cooperation, does not mention possible inclusion or collaboration with non-state actors in carrying out security provisions.

ASEAN states' failure to address the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis collectively, inaction during the East Timor crisis in 1999, divergent views over how to approach Myanmar (formerly Burma), and most importantly, the salience of lingering intra-mural tensions rooted in history, religion, and ethnicity all point to the inability, if not unwillingness, on the part of the member states to devise

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 5.

and implement cooperative actions. The lack of concerted cooperative security architecture or any progress toward crafting one is perplexing given the fact that the Association is at the same time boldly pushing for the creation of a “regional security complex” as envisaged in the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint.<sup>17</sup> In Buzan and Wæver’s words, such a complex can be understood as “durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of subglobal, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence.”<sup>18</sup> Southeast Asia today is equally confronted by the security challenges facing other regions, namely, 1) conflicts are increasingly changing in character; 2) actors are different and multifaceted, and 3) approaches to security are no longer an exclusive political-military state-to-state affairs.<sup>19</sup> In light of a region-wide acknowledgement of security interdependence, this dearth of security cooperation both in spirit and action also casts some doubt over the much extolled “ASEAN Regionalism” vis-à-vis global and other regional forces. Regionalism, in Job’s words, is after all a blanket term describing “the nature of, and the extent to which, member states

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<sup>17</sup> The 2009 APSC Blueprint is an adaptation of the 2003 ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme (VAP), and relevant decisions by various ASEAN Sectoral Bodies. See the ASEAN website for a copy of the *Blueprint* <http://www.aseansec.org/5187-18.pdf>; *Plan of Action*, <http://www.aseansec.org/16826.htm>; and *VAP*, <http://www.aseansec.org/VAP-10th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Kees Homan, “European Views on Comprehensive Security,” 428.



and/or other key actors share commonality of norms, identities, interests and collective actions.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus far, various International Relations (IR) theories have failed to account for this conundrum, namely, the lack of a concerted cooperative security regime or strong region-wide activism toward fashioning one. Consisting mainly of small and weak states, ASEAN’s aversion toward security multilateralism clearly contradicts structural balance-of-power theory which emphasizes 1) small states will form alliances with their peers to oppose stronger powers<sup>21</sup> and that “alliances are a necessary function of the balance-of-power operating in a multiple state system.”<sup>22</sup>

Another second image theory, balance of threat by Walt,<sup>23</sup> is unable to explain ASEAN states’ behavior either. Even when China, with its “charm offensive” doctrine,<sup>24</sup> was once perceived as a threat to the region, enthusiasm for an ASEAN military pact has never been high. Conversely, there was no visible attempt at bandwagoning by any single state in the region either to appease

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<sup>20</sup> Brian L. Job, “Grappling With An Elusive Concept,” in *Security Politics in the Asia Pacific*, ed. William T. Tow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *The Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 175.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Walt, “Alliance formation and the Balance of World Power,” *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-43; *The Origin of Alliance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Amitav Acharya, “Regional Security Arrangements in a Multipolar World?” *FED Briefing Paper* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004), 3, accessed on Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/global/50101.pdf>.

possible Chinese domination or siding with China for profit.<sup>25</sup> Southeast Asian governments balance rising Chinese influence by deftly adopting a hedging strategy: establishing links with extra-regional powers (United States, South Korea, and Japan for example) and diligently practicing low-intensity balancing with the United States against Beijing.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, the absence of joint security cooperation in the region challenges a long-term empirical finding that small states tend to minimize the costs of foreign policy by initiating more joint actions as well as by participating in multi-actor forums.<sup>27</sup> Katzenstein argues that the perception of vulnerability, economic or otherwise, commonly shared by small states induces a greater tendency in them to practice corporatist politics based on the ideology of social partnership.<sup>28</sup> In addition to defusing dependence, small states voluntarily participate in complex political arrangements in the hope to form consensus over cooperative regulations regarding conflict resolution, as well as to build interpenetrating relationships between different actors to accentuate interdependence.<sup>29</sup> Judging from the

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<sup>25</sup> Walt, *The Origin of Alliance*; Randal Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72-107.

<sup>26</sup> Danny Roy, "Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 2 (2005): 305-322.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A test of Two Models," *World Politics* 25, no. 4 (July 1973): 556-576; Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, "Small States and Small States Revisited," *New Political Economy* 8, no. 1 (2003): 9-30.

<sup>29</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

lukewarm activism, if not the absence of enthusiasm, in speeding up the institutionalization of cooperative security, the Southeast Asian states, unlike their European counterparts, eschew corporatist politics and instead prefer unilateral and state-centric security provisions.

In light of the increasing inability of any one ASEAN state to tackle regional security issues (traditional or non-traditional) single-handedly, this dissertation explores why, despite added military security and other non-military benefits such as increased trade and technology transfer,<sup>30</sup> ASEAN states insistently favor unilateral actions. For example, Jakarta's action plan to form a regional peace keeping force encountered strong objections during the 18<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Roundtable (May 30 to June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 in Kuala Lumpur) where member states continued their discussion on the proposed ASEAN Security Community. Notably in their objections, Singapore argued that ASEAN is the wrong entity to play a peacekeeping role as ASEAN should not be seen as a defense or security organization; Malaysia claimed that issues such as peacekeeping should be excluded from the agenda especially when defense cooperation between members has always been on a bilateral basis; and lastly, Thailand deemed the mobilization of such a force unwarranted simply because there is no threat of commensurable gravity facing the region.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Werner Bauwens, Armand Clesse, and Olav F. Knudsen, eds., *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe* (London: Potomac Books, 1996); Heinz Gartner, "Small State and Alliances: Introduction," in *Small States and Alliances*, eds. Erich Reiter and Heinz Gartner (New York: Physica-Verlag Heidelberg, 2001), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Adrian Kuah, "The ASEAN Security Community: Struggling with Details," *IDSS Commentaries* 21 (Singapore: Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, June 15, 2004).

This dissertation seeks to explain this puzzle from the premise of strategic culture, namely, the culture of strategic decision making. The regional norm against interference and use of force, commonly known as the ASEAN Way, should not be taken as representative of the views of individual member states. This dissertation hypothesizes that, in a conflict-ridden region and amid a strong intramural distrust, the distinctive attribute of ASEAN states, smallness, has fostered a *two-tiered* strategic culture. At the regional level, ASEAN states seek to maximize latitude under the rubric of state sovereignty while maintaining a nominal coalition against outside (stronger) powers. At the state-level, the propensity to conflict is stronger and the right to use force is carefully guarded to protect a highly securitized state vis-à-vis (distrustful) neighbors.

9/11 and its aftermath have paradigmatically shifted how national and international security are perceived.<sup>32</sup> The broadened conceptualization of “human security” has underscored some degree of perceived security interdependence between nations of the world as well. In addition, the rise of the “securitization” discourse on how a particular issue is politicized and transformed by actors into a matter of security has also challenged the merit and utility of the conventional security focus solely on the material dispositions of threat.<sup>33</sup> With a renewed U.S. interest in multilateralism, greater engagement with ASEAN,

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<sup>32</sup> Kuniharu Kakihara, “The Post-9/11 Paradigm shift and its Effect on East Asia,” *IPPS Policy Paper* 292E (Tokyo: Institute of International Policy Studies, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Japp de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

especially in security matters, is expected.<sup>34</sup> Appreciating the logic behind ASEAN states' unwillingness to commit to at least a concert arrangement is thus imperative to our understanding of the scope and extent of regionalization and securitization in Southeast Asia in particular and the greater Asia Pacific in general.

### The Benign Neglect

The academic interest in Southeast Asian security issues has long mirrored the U.S. "benign neglect" of the region.<sup>35</sup> Of the few published works on ASEAN states' reluctance to build cooperative security, much of the research resorts to a constructivist explanation. The almost rigid adherence to and the "enmeshing" normative influence of the "ASEAN Way" create a conservative identity that not only limits creative diplomatic proposals and constrains integrative initiatives but also justifies inaction.<sup>36</sup> These assorted norms have been popularized since the inception of the Association to reinforce sovereign equality through consensual

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<sup>34</sup> Evans Feigenbaum and Robert Manning, "The United States in the New Asia," *Council special Report* 50 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Diane Mauzy and Brian Job, "U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia: Limited Re-Engagement after Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 1 (2007): 622-41.

<sup>36</sup> Markus Hund, "From 'Neighborhood Watch Group' to Community?: The Case of ASEAN Institutions and the Pooling of Sovereignty," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 1 (2002): 99-122; Jurgen Haacke, "ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: A Constructivist Assessment," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 3 (2003): 57-87; Hiro Katsumata, "Reconstruction of Diplomatic Norms in Southeast Asia: The Case for Strict Adherence to the 'ASEAN Way'," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 25, no. 1 (2003): 104-121; Amitav Acharya, "Why Is there No NATO in Asia?: The Normative Origins of Asian Multilateralism," *WCIA Working Paper* 05-05 (Cambridge: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, 2005); Sheldon Simon, "ASEAN and Multilateralism: the Long, Bumpy Road to Community," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 264-292.

decision making, non-interference in members' internal affairs, avoidance of legally binding commitments, and voluntary enforcement of regional decisions. Yet, the ASEAN Way explanation has proven to be a myth.<sup>37</sup> It cannot account for the continued efforts led by individual states such as Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, and Indonesia to further reinvent, if not to break away from, the ASEAN way in the forms of flexible intervention, enhanced interaction, constructive engagement, ASEAN security community, and most recently, critical disengagement.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike the constructivists, realists attribute the absence of a credible military bloc to the lack of an identifiable external threat to the region.<sup>39</sup> There is in fact "no single, overarching menace like Soviet communism" to bind Asian states to each other.<sup>40</sup> It is understandable that ASEAN does not wish to effect a formal military alliance. Such an arrangement entails an agreed threat and consensus on how to deal with it. However, most ASEAN militaries insistently

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<sup>37</sup> Tobias I. Nischalk, "Insights from ASEAN's Foreign Policy Co-Operation: The ASEAN Way, A Real Spirit or Phantom?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, no. 1 (2000): 107.

<sup>38</sup> Carlyle A. Thayer, "Reinventing ASEAN: From Constructive Engagement to Flexible Intervention," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* 3, no. 2 (1999): 67-70; Jurgen Haacke, "The Concept of Flexible Engagement and the Practice of Enhanced Interaction: Intramural Challenges to the 'ASEAN Way'," *The Pacific Review* 12, no. 4 (1999): 581-611; Lee Jones, "ASEAN's Albatross: ASEAN's Burma Policy, From Constructive Engagement to Critical Disengagement," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 3 (2008): 271-293.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Leifer, "The Paradox of ASEAN: A Security Organization Without the Structure of an Alliance," *The Round Table* 68, no. 271 (July 1978): 261-268; Shaun Narine, *Explaining ASEAN: Regionalism in Southeast Asia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); Beverly Loke, "The ASEAN Way: Towards Regional Order and Security Cooperation?" *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 30 (2005-6): 8-37.

<sup>40</sup> Derek Chollet, "Time for an Asian NATO?" *Foreign Policy* 123 (March/April 2001): 92.

prefer *not* to work together even when numerous non-traditional security threats such as terrorism and transnational crime have growing salience. Simon once observed in 2005 that “there are no ongoing exercises or patrols involving the armed forces of three or more Southeast Asian states that either cross national boundaries or operate on the high seas or in international air space.”<sup>41</sup> It was not until very recently that some joint patrol activities by several littoral states in the Malacca Strait occurred, though prior consultation is still required when entering other’s territorial water.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, modernization theorists posit that the European nation-state and the Asian nation-state are at different stages of development<sup>43</sup>. Whereas the European political and economic systems are characterized by an exceptionally high degree of interdependence, similar development is less progressive in Southeast Asia. On one hand, such high degree of interdependence compels states to voluntarily transfer sovereignty to supranational regimes tasked to handle outstanding inter-state conflicts of various kinds. On the other hand, states involuntarily lose sovereignty “to the market and the subsequent efforts to recapture that sovereignty via membership in international institutions that

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<sup>41</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, “Southeast Asia’s Defense Needs: Change or Continuity,” in *Strategic Asia 2005-06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asia Research, 2005), 299.

<sup>42</sup> “US Supports Tripartite Malacca Straits Security Arrangements,” *Antara* (Jakarta), Jan 11, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Terence Chong, *Modernization Trend in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

facilitate multilateral governance and joint problem solving.”<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, it is neither necessary nor useful for Southeast Asian states to embed themselves in a web of contractual obligations until the region reaches the level of development comparable to current day Europe.

Lastly, the highly personalized politics and strong-man leadership style traditionally found in ASEAN states led many to hypothesize that with Soeharto of Indonesia, Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore, and Mahathir of Malaysia no longer in leadership positions, no current ASEAN leaders can construct a regional security arrangement acceptable to all ASEAN states.<sup>45</sup> However, even when the “big three” were in power, no region-wide security cooperation existed.

### Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

This dissertation seeks to explain the lack of cooperative security in Southeast Asia from the premise of strategic culture. The study of strategic culture is a specific attempt by IR scholars to “engage with and go beyond realism by reasserting the importance of cultural, ideational, and normative influences on the motivations of states and their leaders.”<sup>46</sup> This is also an effort by IR scholars

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<sup>44</sup> James Sperling, “A Problem of Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific,” in *Zones of Amity, Zones of Enmity: The Prospects for Economic and Military Security in Asia*, ed. James Sperling, Yogendra K. Malik, David J. Louscher (Boston: Brill, 1998), 13.

<sup>45</sup> Kwei-Bo Huang, “Managing Southeast Asian Security: The ASEAN Security Community and Institutional Change in ASEAN,” (paper prepared for the 46th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Honolulu, Hawaii, March 1–5, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> John Glenn, Darryl Howlett, and Stuard Poore, eds., *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 4.



to study foreign policy behavior from the local or national political context.<sup>47</sup>

More notably, the strategic culture approach complements the rationality assumption.<sup>48</sup> “It allows that most actors are likely rational, but insists that rationality must be understood within a cultural context.”<sup>49</sup>

Strategic culture is defined as a distinctive set of socialized, internalized, and legitimized beliefs, assumptions, and behavior patterns regarding the appropriate means and ends chosen by members of the national security community to achieve the security and defense objectives of the state.<sup>50</sup> Strategic community consists of the groups of people responsible for making strategic decisions in a given state. Through socialization, internalization and legitimatization, these shared beliefs, assumptions, and behavior patterns *over time* have attained “a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than policy.”<sup>51</sup> This strategic culture acts as an intervening

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<sup>47</sup> Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction: Asian Regionalism in Comparative Perspective," in *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, eds. Peter Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Realism and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>49</sup> Jeannie Johnson, *Strategic Culture: Refining the Theoretical Construct* (Fort Belvoir, VA: Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 2006), 9.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Mahnken, *United States Strategic Culture* (Fort Belvoir, VA: The Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2008), 4; John Glenn, “Realism versus Strategic Culture: Competition and Collaboration?” *International Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (2009): 530.

<sup>51</sup> Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977), 8.

variable through which the strategic community derives a permissible boundary to formulate their strategies to the security and defense problems at hand.<sup>52</sup>

Combining the theoretical framework of strategic culture and the empirical findings about small state decision making process, this dissertation hypothesizes that the distinctive attribute of ASEAN states, smallness, has fostered a two-tiered strategic culture. Where threat to the region as a whole has been historically low, the region has socialized, internalized, and legitimized a passive and defensive strategic culture to engage external pressures. At the state-level where intramural distrust has not receded, the highly securitized ASEAN states have developed a reactive and provocative strategic culture with higher propensity to conflict and lower propensity to cooperate. The push and pull of two diagonal tendencies inhibit the genuine establishment of cooperative security in the region.

As Southeast Asia has been labeled the “second front of terrorism,” external powers such as the U.S. have been increasingly pressing the region for enhanced military and security cooperation. However, one should understand, after reading this dissertation, that ASEAN is not NATO. ASEAN is devoid of genuine trust internally, a prerequisite for security cooperation. Confidence building must precede military cooperation.

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<sup>52</sup> Christoph Meyer, “Convergence Toward a European Strategic Culture,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 4 (2005): 528.

A secondary goal of this dissertation is to examine small state behavior in the strategic culture context. For the same reason that IR scholars study strategic culture of great powers, this dissertation attempts to create a conceptual framework through which we may better understand why certain policy options are chosen and pursued by small states. The role of small powers has been increasingly magnified in an ever-globalized international community to an extent where “their number alone may come to signify powerful coalitions capable of resisting and even curbing the influence of what are traditionally perceived as larger powers.”<sup>53</sup> Yet, the absence of empirical studies and under-theorization on small state decision making processes reflect the general research trend in the field overall. Christmas-Møller once lamented that “the small state approach never became... that sort of fashionable approach which attracts the attention of the ‘big shots’ within the discipline.”<sup>54</sup> This dissertation shows that not only size matters, but also how and why it matters.

There are many justifications for small states studies in general, but four are particularly relevant in the IR context.<sup>55</sup> The first and most obvious justification is that we live in a world where the great majority of the legally

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<sup>53</sup> Christos Kassimeris, “The Foreign Policy of Small Powers,” *International Politics* 46, no.1 (2009): 96.

<sup>54</sup> Wilhelm Christmas-Møller, “Some Thoughts on the Scientific Applicability of the small State Concept: A Research History and a Discussion,” in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Høll (Vienna: Braumuller, 1983), 39.

<sup>55</sup> Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, “Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World,” in *Small States in International Relations*, eds. Christine Ingerbritsen et al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 3-36.

sovereign states are small in their absolute size and/or relative power. Second, the conventional focus on states with capabilities and their assumed pending actions has long been criticized and challenged as incomplete from a global perspective. Third, from an institutionalist point of view, smaller powers may be capable of shaping international institutions as they are also participants of the international system. Lastly, to lend support to the third justification, institutions should be seen not only as the outcome of great-power bargains, but also in terms of all actors' relations. A world sharing a strategic culture with lower propensity to conflict and higher propensity to cooperate is less prone to interstate violence than a world beset with a belligerent strategic culture. Moreover, recent events have shown that small state behavior has major consequences for regional security. In regional security forums such as the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the United Nations General Assembly, small states have not only actively participated in the construction and maintenance of such forums, but also continuously shaped the rules and laws of regional governance in their favor. After all, as Coplin once said, all states—large or small—do have interests beyond their immediate border.<sup>56</sup>

#### Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 offers a thorough survey of the conceptual development of strategic culture and a critique of previous attempts at operationalizing the

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<sup>56</sup> William Coplin, *Introduction to International Politics* (Chicago: Markham, 1971), 128.

concept. The chapter proceeds with three hypotheses regarding small state strategic culture in general and three auxiliary hypotheses on Southeast Asian state behavior in particular. The chapter ends with discussions of research design, methodology, and foreseeable problems confronting the research.

Chapter 3-5 are the narrative part of computerized content analysis on security related documents of the three chosen cases: Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia. The choice of these three countries is justified on several grounds. First, these countries have all met the combined definitional requirement of small states: objective smallness and self-perceived smallness. Second, these three countries are among the founding member of ASEAN and later the supporters for the initiation of ARF. If the rationale for establishing a regional cooperative security regime in Southeast Asia is to mitigate the fears shared by these small states due to a heightened sense of vulnerability, differences in regime type, and lingering intramural suspicion based on past grievances, the corporatist strategies practiced by their European peers should find equal, if not stronger, manifestation in the three. Yet, the lack of activism both in action and spirit of these three countries in pushing for a regional cooperative security architecture have all defied the theoretical and empirical expectations of small state behavior. Third, the puzzle is ever more perplexing especially when all three countries have reiterated in their contribution to the annual ARF Security Outlook the importance of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the face of a new and shifting security environment.

Chapter 6 examines how the strategic culture of Malaysia and Singapore, approximated by propensities for conflict and cooperation, affect their participation in several operationalized maritime security regimes in the region. Chapter 7 traces the Thai-Cambodia border conflict over the Preah Vihear Temple as the event unfolds. Special attention is given to the reasoning behind the Thai rejection to third-country mediation while insisting on solving the conflict through bilateral means. Chapter 8 concludes with a remark on the prospects for the development and maturation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community.

## Chapter 2

### STRATEGIC CULTURE, SMALL STATES, AND ASEAN

The ongoing debate over the hegemony of realism in elucidating state strategic behaviors prompts many scholars to search for alternative interpretations. The conventional reduction of culture into “a *dues ex machina* variable that either ‘mops up’ residual variance or deals with discomfort deficiencies of existing research programmes” fails to appreciate the wider literature on the relationships between ideational influences and policy outputs.<sup>57</sup> However, analyses that over-rely on cultural variables without being theoretically compelling and empirically sound tend to fall prey to cultural particularism. “The weakness of the cultural explanation,” says Barrington Moore “is not in the statement of such facts..., but in the way they are put into the explanation.”<sup>58</sup> While this is not the place to peruse the meaning of culture, its epistemological stance, and ontological status, this dissertation adopts Geertz’s definition and states that culture “consists of socially established structures of meaning in terms of which people do... things.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Andreas Gofas, “Structure, Agency and Intersubjectivity: Re-capturing the EMU Policy Process in a Constructivist Realist Framework,” (paper prepared for the 2nd workshop of the European Political-economy Infrastructure Consortium, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy, May 2002, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 485.

<sup>59</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 12.

The study of strategic culture is a specific attempt by numerous scholars to “engage with and go beyond realism by reasserting the importance of cultural, ideational, and normative influences on the motivations of states and their leaders.”<sup>60</sup> While scholars disagree on the definition of the term, the logic of strategic culture appears to be highly complementary to realist explanations of state strategic behaviors. More importantly, the strategic culture approach is highly compatible with rationality.<sup>61</sup> Specifically, “[i]t allows that most actors are likely rational, but insists that rationality must be understood within a cultural context.”<sup>62</sup>

Though the concept of strategic culture is still hotly contested and its applicability widely questioned, researchers have largely concurred that culture can be taken as an alternative explanation for either interstate or intrastate behavior.<sup>63</sup> While culture as a concept or variable may be too broad as to explain nothing, there is definitely something “out there” through which people derive thoughts and articulate preferences.<sup>64</sup> Warm feelings toward ideational explanations notwithstanding, the only agreed upon direction for studying

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<sup>60</sup> John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuard Poore, eds., “Introduction” in *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 4.

<sup>61</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Realism and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995a), 1.

<sup>62</sup> Jeannie Johnson, *Strategic Culture: Refining the Theoretical Construct* (Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, Oct. 2006), 9.

<sup>63</sup> Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson, *Culture and Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, “Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation,” *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 1 (March 1987): 5.



strategic culture thus far consists of a consensus on embracing culture as a variable in analyzing foreign policy and security decision making.<sup>65</sup> This consensus, however, should not be seen as an endorsement for over-privileging ideational variables at the expense of non-ideational ones.

In effect, there are two common misconceptions about what strategic culture really *is*. First, the study of strategic culture is not just about how “culture” influences strategic policy output. According to Gaddis, strategy is the process by which ends are related to means, intentions to capabilities, and objectives to resources.”<sup>66</sup> To be correct, strategic culture is about the “culture” of strategic decision making. Strategic culture thus should reflect the rationale and logic behind why specific policy is chosen to address a given problem. Moreover, as suggested by Haglund, “strategy” should be understood as “a rational link between ends and means [as one] attempts to correlate, in a manner that can pass basic-cost-benefit muster, your goal with the resources at your disposal, and vice versa.”<sup>67</sup>

Secondly, the misconception that strategy is all about “things martial”<sup>68</sup> is unfortunate but understandable. Such misconception can be attributed to the fact that historically states often use military forces to solve inter-state conflicts. The

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<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Strategic Culture*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), viii.

<sup>67</sup> David G. Haglund, “What Good is Strategic Culture: A Modest Defence of an Immodest Concept,” *International Journal* 59, no. 3 (2004): 482-3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 482.

corollary infatuation International Relation researchers place on relative capabilities dwarfs the value and merit of other elements of power in comparison. As the facet of “insecurity” increasingly diversifies, so do the strategies at states’ disposal. Use of deadly force and preemption (the so-called things martial), as suggested by the principle of Just War, has gradually become the last resort. The second misconception points to the fact that the conventional focus on military strategy in security studies in general and strategic culture research in particular negates the possibility of states preferring, exploring and, adopting non-military strategies.

Due to the traditional interest international relations scholars hold in great powers (typically with long history and extensive war experience) and the surge of culture-friendly researches in the last three decades, the existing empirical studies often produce variations of ideationally based strategic cultures found in great powers. In effect, the existing literature offers a “one-for-all” formula to uncover the relationship between strategic culture and state behavior. Little attempt has been made to differentiate which, how, and when strategic culture influences strategic decision making in small states. The effect of this discrepancy is most deeply felt when one tries to study the strategic culture of ASEAN in general and how such culture affects the intramural cooperation in the security realm in particular. This dissertation thus challenges the conventional wisdom that strategic culture is mainly ideationally defined, largely derived from history and past war experience. In small states where historical experience or historically

rooted strategic preferences may be limited, material influences and situational considerations should take precedence over ideational factors. However, this should by no means be taken as a refusal to consider the potential of ideational variables in formulating a small state's ranked strategic preferences. Given that no methodological attempt has been made to determine the relative importance each type of factors has on the formation of a state's strategic culture, this dissertation proposes to adopt computer-assisted conceptual and relational content analysis to gauge the relative weight of the constituent elements of strategic culture (see the methodology section below). A better understanding of small state strategic culture will ultimately shed light over our main question: why is there still no concrete cooperative security regime in Southeast Asia.

#### A Critique on Strategic Culture: Concept and Methodology

The strategic culture literature can be divided temporally into four generations (the late 1970s, the 1980s, the mid-1990s, and post-2000), albeit not without some overlaps and omissions.<sup>69</sup> The term "strategic culture" was first coined by Jack Snyder in his study of Soviet nuclear doctrines. He defines the term broadly as "the sum total of ideals, conditional emotional responses, and patterns of behavior that members of the national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to

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<sup>69</sup> For a more detailed description of the three generations see, Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 4-22; Lawrence Sandhouse, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 124-5.

nuclear strategy.”<sup>70</sup> However, it should be especially noted that in Snyder’s usage, strategic culture is a generic term. It does not prioritize ideational factors over other non-ideational variables. Writers on strategic culture tend to use the terms “culture,” “ideational,” and “normative” interchangeably without clearly differentiating the three.

Snyder notices that, though strategic culture is articulated by the elites, it should nevertheless be a product of the collective, a reflection of the communal experience, and a manifestation of public opinion. A strategic culture emerges as elites socialize these collective properties into a distinct mode of strategic thinking. “[A]s a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns with regards to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than policy.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, through this socialization process, “a” culture is developed regarding strategic decision making. Snyder’s conceptualization of strategic culture provides the basis for the concept to develop and progress. What follows are four generations of scholarly efforts dedicated to analyze the concept in depth, both theoretically and methodologically.

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<sup>70</sup> Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options* (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 1977), 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

### *The 1<sup>st</sup> Generation: Strategic Culture as Context*

Colin Gray, a representative of the first generation, shares a similar passion with Snyder in fusing the notion of culture into the field of security studies. Gray's article, *Strategic Culture as Context*, is a direct reply to recent criticisms by third-generation theorists of strategic culture.<sup>72</sup> In particular, Gray finds that the third generation's positivist model rests upon a misunderstanding of the nature, character, and "working" of strategic culture. In his article, Gray suggests that the concept provides context for understanding, rather than explanatory causality, of state strategic behavior.

To support his point, Gray employs a dualistic definition of context. On one hand, Gray argues that context can be considered as something "out there," typically in concentric circles, meaning "that which surrounds." On the other hand, Gray asserts that context can be understood as "that which weaves together." To Gray, definitional clarity is not always necessary because the dimensions of strategy interpenetrate. The decisions made by a security community are affected by culturally shaped, or "encultured" people, organization, procedures and weapons. Gray, too, treats strategic culture as a property of the collective. Such product embraces the "modes of thought and action with respect to force, which derives from perceptions of the national historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behavior in national

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<sup>72</sup> Colin Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: the First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999a): 49-69.

terms... and the civic culture and way of life.”<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, strategic culture can be conceived as “a context out there that surrounds, and gives meaning to, strategic behavior, as the total warp and woof of matters strategic that are thoroughly woven together, or as both.”<sup>74</sup>

Unlike Snyder, Gray is less clear on which agent is responsible for formulating strategic culture and who is in charge of applying it in foreign policy making. Given that both Snyder and Gray’s work on nuclear strategies and superpower relations can only be understood in the Cold War context, the transferability of their conceptualization of strategic culture outside of the Cold War context is questionable. Later comparative works on strategic culture by Roland Ebel *et al.*, Thomas Berger, Ken Booth and Russell Trood, Sten Rynning, and Christoph Meyer, however, demonstrate that such transferability is not only desirable, but also possible.<sup>75</sup>

Yet, Gray’s conceptualization of strategic culture leaves three other questions unanswered. First, strategic culture as context implies that the society from which strategic culture derives its contextual sources is homogeneous. Gray

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<sup>73</sup> Colin Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), 36-37.

<sup>74</sup> Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context,” 51.

<sup>75</sup> For comparative analysis of strategic culture and country profiles outside of the Cold War context, see, for example, Ken Booth and Russell Trood, eds., *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Thomas Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Roland H. Ebel, Raymond Taras, and James D. Cochrane, *Political Culture and Foreign Policy in Latin America: Case Studies from the Circum-Caribbean* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991); Stein Rynning, “The European Union: Toward a Strategic Culture?” in *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 4 (December 2003): 479-496; and Christoph Meyer, “Theorizing European Strategic Culture: Between Convergence and the Persistence of National Diversity,” CEPS Working Document 204 (Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies, June 2004).

does not consider “society” as the amalgamation of diverse agents with potentially conflicting interests. No matter how these agents behave, they are inevitably “encultured,” and thus, their interaction necessarily yields a homogenous strategic culture. Moreover, once strategic culture is formed, no one in the society would challenge or object to its content. Second, by treating all agents as being culturally bound, Gray rules out the possibility of a disjunction between strategic culture and behavior. There is no discussion in Gray’s article on why strategic culture would always exist *a priori* to condition the making of strategic decisions. Third, Gray is equally vague on the processes of deriving an observable strategic culture. Against the “encultured” backdrop, how can strategic culture be distinguished from the “Big C culture”? This first generation literature on strategic culture also lacks methodologies to distinguish the concept from other ideational variables.

### *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation: the “Strategic Use of Culture” on the Part of Elites*

The second generation scholars preoccupy themselves with the “strategic use of culture” on the part of elites. According to them, the first generation is less appreciative of “firstly, the inherently constructed nature of identity and culture and secondly, the role of agency in producing such structure.”<sup>76</sup> This generation begins thus “from the premises that there is potentially a vast difference between what leaders think and say they do, and the deeper motives for doing what they in

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<sup>76</sup> Edward Lock, “Refining Strategic Culture: Return of the Second Generation,” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 692.

fact do.”<sup>77</sup> Researchers such as Bradley Klein, Charles Kupchan, Robert Lukham, and Chaim Kaufmann, to name just a few, focus their research agenda on the instrumentability of strategic culture.<sup>78</sup> These scholars, in Gray’s opinion, “[seek] the cunning coded messages behind the language of strategic studies.”<sup>79</sup> They draw heavily from sociology on culture and preference formation.<sup>80</sup> Culture is seen as “a tool kit’ of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kind of problems.”<sup>81</sup>

In other words, the second generation focuses their studies on the instrumentability of strategic culture. Jeffery Lantis’ article, *Strategic Culture and National Security Policy*, points to the fact that leaders have the ability “to choose when and where to stake claims of strategic culture traditions and when and where to consciously move beyond previous boundaries of acceptability in foreign policy behavior.”<sup>82</sup> According to Lantis, strategic culture is at best a

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<sup>77</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 15.

<sup>78</sup> For the most representative works of the second generation, see, for example, Bradley Klein, “Hegemonic and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 133-48; Robin Luckham, “Armaments Culture,” *Alternatives* 10, no. 1 (1994): 1-44; Charles Kupchan, *Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Chaim Kaufmann, “Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of idea: The Selling of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 5-48.

<sup>79</sup> Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context,” 49.

<sup>80</sup> For more details, see Consuelo Cruz, “Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make their Futures,” *World Politics* 52, no. 3, (April 2000): 275-312; and Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2, (1986): 273-286.

<sup>81</sup> Swidler, “Culture in Action,” 273.

<sup>82</sup> Jeffery Lantis, “Strategic Culture and National Security Policy,” *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2003): 107.



“negotiated reality” among elites.<sup>83</sup> The history of Western countries provides the second generation scholars with ample evidence of elites “ris[ing] above strategic cultural constraints to solve different kind of problems.”<sup>84</sup> For example, Kaufmann shows that the emphasis on pre-emptive strike within the U.S. strategic culture is seen as an attempt to reframe security issues with exaggerated threat perception and to justify organized state violence.<sup>85</sup>

However, Lantis’ observation on the elites’ strategic use of culture assumes that elites are virtually omnipotent in their ability to manipulate and stretch cultural constraints. The second generation scholars fail to see that strategic constraints can backfire by trapping decision makers in the strategic culture they helped create in the first place. Snyder concurs with Johnston on the semi-permanent feature of strategic culture. Even if it does transform, “it does so slowly, lagging behind changes in ‘objective conditions.’”<sup>86</sup> By and large, it takes time as well as articulation for culture to penetrate “all matters strategic.” In this case, elites are not as free as predicted by the second generation theorists in their ability to generate and replace one strategic culture after another. In addition, the second generation literature does not address the (re)emergence of a new culture and its influence on a state’s strategic orientation. Nor does it discuss the form, speed and effect of the adjustment process. On the whole, the second generation

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, “Thinking About Strategic Culture,” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995b): 12.

<sup>85</sup> Kaufmann, “Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of idea.”

<sup>86</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 1.

theory fails to tackle one of the most crucial questions in the study of strategic culture, namely, what does it mean for a society to have a strategic culture that is susceptible to frequent changes?

Moreover, Johnston's brief discussion on the second generation conceptualization of strategic culture brings to our attention two other conceptual conundrums.<sup>87</sup> First, due to the heavy emphasis on agency, it is not entirely clear from the second generation theorization whether we should anticipate strategic discourse to influence policy outcome at all. The causal linkage between culture and behavior becomes problematic when elites are at the same time the source of strategic culture and the medium in (re)interpreting its content. Second, the elite-centric approach cannot confidently reject the neorealist assumption that to maximize security, "elites around the world ought to share similarly militaristic or realpolitik strategic preferences."<sup>88</sup> If the quests for power and security do mandate elites world-wide to opt for similar strategic preferences, no cross-national differences in operational strategy can be expected. In this case, the influence of strategic culture on any state's strategic behavior becomes quite miniscule, if not irrelevant.

### *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation: Falsifiable Theory and Competitive Theory Testing*

The third generation shifts its attention away from both context and instrumentability to a new search of a more falsifiable theorization of strategic

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<sup>87</sup> Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," 39-41.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 41.

culture. This generation also focuses more narrowly on particular strategic decisions as dependent variables. Most notably, the third generation definition of “culture” explicitly excludes behavior as an element, thereby avoiding the “encultured” trap of the first generation. The debate between Gray and Johnston best illustrates the divergent approaches that the two generations take to study and apply strategic culture. “[T]he key point of contention... is whether their referent object of study should be used to try to ‘understand’ [Gray] or ‘to explain’ [Johnston] the strategic behavior of states in security and defense affairs”<sup>89</sup>.

Johnston’s first article, *Thinking About Strategic Culture*, prescribes a positivist model for linking strategic culture to state strategic behavior. He defines strategic culture as “an integrated system of symbols that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious”<sup>90</sup> Johnston’s goal is to identify causal linkages between idea and behavior. To do so, he assumes that behavior can be separated from ideas and that cultural variables can be distinguished from non-cultural ones. For example, political culture, defense budget, and regime type that were once seen only as part of “the context” are now contextual sources for strategic culture. Two forms of content analysis, cognitive mapping and symbol

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<sup>89</sup> Christoph Meyer, “Convergence Toward a European Strategic Culture,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 4 (December 2005): 527.

<sup>90</sup> Johnston, “Thinking About Strategic Culture,” 41.

analysis, are useful in discerning variables contributing to the making of strategic culture.

By adopting the Goldstein-Keohane approach to ideational factors, Johnston is able to pit cultural variables against non-cultural ones and consequently weed out those variables that have no bearing on the content of strategic culture.<sup>91</sup> In his later article, *Strategic Culture Revisited*, Johnston makes clear that the pitting process will continue until “your tests accounted for the possibility that strategic culture might not matter, or that it might not exist intersubjectively across large numbers of decision makers, or that it might be transnational, class-based, or gender-based rather than ethno nationally-based.”<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, Johnston urges his colleagues and readers to be open-minded about the relationship between strategic culture and other exogenous independent variables. In Johnston’s view, while strategic culture may provide a limited range of choices and tendencies, a situational character such as geography may act as an intervening variable to determine which tendency kicks in and when. Second, strategic culture may appear as a consistent set of ranked preferences, persisting over time and across strategic context. Third, strategic culture may mediate or moderate the effects of other independent variables. Lastly, strategic culture may remain symbolic in nature and have no appreciable effect on state strategic

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<sup>91</sup> The null hypothesis Goldstein and Keohane formulated states that “variation in policy across countries, or over time, is entirely accounted for by changes in factors *other than* ideas.” Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., “Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework,” in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 6.

<sup>92</sup> Alastair I. Johnston, “Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1999): 521.

behavior. Notably, Johnston's broad conception of the "working" of strategic culture is in direct contrast to the first generation's over-deterministic interpretation in which strategic culture presides over the interaction of and the decisions made by the members of strategic community. Nonetheless, Johnston is uncertain about how a specific decision is chosen from the ranked preferences. Do political agents in Johnston's model exercise the same power as those described by the second generation scholars? After all, it is a ranked preference and someone has to make a choice.

Johnston's positivist approach is not without limitations. In his reply to the Gray-Johnston debate, Stuart Poore finds Johnston's model short of compelling mechanisms to measure the pervasiveness of strategic culture or to denote the internalization process of strategic culture by decision-makers.<sup>93</sup> On top of Poore's critique, Johnston's model can be replicated only if researchers unconditionally accept Johnston's assumption that behavior can be separated from *a priori* strategic culture. Johnston later addresses this specific point in his reply to Colin Gray by admitting that only by accidentally conceding that "behavior at time *t* can be separable from an *a priori* strategic culture it becomes obvious that there are other, non strategic culture variables" that help explain state strategic behavior<sup>94</sup>. Yet, this supposition is inherently contradictory to his theorization of strategic culture. Specifically, the existence of a strategic culture *a priori* denies

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<sup>93</sup> Stuart Poore, "What is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): 282-83.

<sup>94</sup> Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited," 521.

the possibility that strategic culture may not exist. In fact, it is a common theoretical blindfold shared by all three generations of scholars who have left unexplored the possibility of strategic decisions without an overarching strategic culture.

#### *The 4th Generation: Issue Specific and Non-State Actors*

While the previous three generations examine strategic culture on a macro scale with state as the unit of analysis, the fourth generation strategic culture scholars take a rather “micro” approach, narrowing the unit of analysis to non-state actors in specific security issue areas such as terrorist groups and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The late comers concentrate not on theory development but the application of the theory and how this theory may help us to better understand the newest sources of insecurity as well as their perpetrators.

Specifically, much research interest is placed on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The “WMD strategic culture” can be organized into five categories: proliferation (general), religion/theology, actor-specific, sociology and psychology.<sup>95</sup> Associated with the interest in WMD is the focus on terrorism

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<sup>95</sup> Thomas Skypek, *Comparative Strategic Cultures: Literature Review* (Fort Belvoir, Virginia: Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 2006). For sample essays of each category, see Kerry Kartchner, Jeannie L. Johnson and Jeffrey A. Larsen, *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights Into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

in general and certain terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in particular.<sup>96</sup> Lastly, the political-security integration of Europe, culminated in the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), also proves to be a fertile ground for scholars to inquire about the emergence and nature of a Euro-centric strategic culture through which European governments deal with new sources of insecurities.<sup>97</sup> In addition, there is also a notably trend in exploring quantitative measures to operationalize the concept of “culture” and its effect on behavior.<sup>98</sup> Because the scholarly outputs produced are actor- and issue-specific, it is perceivably harder to transfer the insights into other areas of security studies. The methodological improvement is commendable but not without some criticism, especially those coming from adherents to qualitative methods.

### Strategic Culture and Small states

All these debates on theoretical and methodological issues notwithstanding, the bulk of the empirical case studies have been centered on great powers with extensive war experience or long history. In essence, the relationship between strategic culture and small state behavior is under-theorized.

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<sup>96</sup> For example of strategic culture on Al Qaida, see Jerry M. Long, *Strategic Culture, Al-Qaida, and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, (Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 2006); and on non-state actors in general, see Jeffrey S. Lantis, “Strategic Culture and Tailored Deterrence: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 30, no. 3 (2009): 467–485.

<sup>97</sup> For examples, see Per M. Martinsen, “The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP): A Strategic Culture in the Making” (paper prepared for the ECPR Conference, Marburg, September 18-21, 2003); and Sten Rynning, “A European Security Culture?: The ESDP and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Geopolitics” (paper prepared for the ECPR Conference,” Edinburgh, March 28—April 2, 2003).

<sup>98</sup> For example, see Huiyun Feng, *Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Confucianism, Leadership and War* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

The lack of empirical studies and under-theorization on small state decision making processes reflect the general research trend in the field of International Relations overall. Christmas-Møller once lamented that “the small state approach never became... that sort of fashionable approach which attracts the attention of the ‘bit shots’ within the discipline.”<sup>99</sup> Given the origin of strategic culture, the most popular candidates have been the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>100</sup> China, Japan, Germany, India, for examples, have later attracted attention from the community as these countries re-emerge on the world stage as aspiring great powers.<sup>101</sup>

However, as early as 1973, East had already rejected the assumption that the general process of decision making in small states is the same as those found in large states.<sup>102</sup> He tested two competing models using a dataset of foreign policy events initiated by 32 states of varying sizes and levels of economic development in the time period from 1959 to 1968. East’s findings suggest that

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<sup>99</sup> Wilhelm Christmas-Møller, “Some Thoughts on the Scientific Applicability of the Small State Concept: A Research History and a Discussion,” in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll (Vienna: Braumuller, 1983), 39.

<sup>100</sup> For examples, Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*; Michael Williams, *On Mars and Venus: Strategic Culture as an Intervening Variable in US and European Foreign Policy* (London: Lit Verlag, 2005).

<sup>101</sup> For examples, Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontation 1949-58* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Forrest Morgan, *Compellence and the Strategic Culture of Japan* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Marcus Kim, “India” in *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture*, eds. John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore (Burlington, VT, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004); Tobias Wilke, *German Strategic Culture Revisited* (London: Lit Verlag, 2008).

<sup>102</sup> Maurice East, “Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models,” *World Politics* 25, no. 4 (1973): 556-576.



small states tend to minimize the costs of foreign policy by initiating more joint actions and by participating in multi-actor forums. Katzenstein, in his studies on how small European states devise their industrial policies, also found that the perception of vulnerability, economic or otherwise, commonly shared by small states compels them to practice corporatist politics with actors within and outside the state.<sup>103</sup> In other words, small states are more willing to negotiate and cooperate in complex political arrangements in hopes defusing lopsided dependency while at the same time highlighting the benefit, risk, and cost of breaking away from the web of interdependence.

On the whole, the strategic culture literature presents a lengthy debate on theory building while researchers have made little improvement on the methodologies to uncover strategic culture. In particular, the literature offers a “one-for-all” formula to unveil how ideational factors influence states’ strategic policy output. No attempt has been done to distinguish the impact of strategic culture on small states. The closest studies extant are those on how security identity influences foreign policy behavior of the small European states, especially in relation to EU integration.<sup>104</sup> Security identity is broadly understood as “a product of past behavior and images and myths linked to it which have been internalized over long periods of time by the political elite and the population of a

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<sup>103</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, “Small States and Small States Revisited,” *New Political Economy* 8, no. 1 (2003): 9-30.

<sup>104</sup> Laurent Goetschel, ed., *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998).

state.”<sup>105</sup> These studies however do not necessarily focus on “strategic” policy or security per se. Their interests spread across various topics of foreign policy including international trade, human security, participation in international regimes, global governance, etc.

Yet, given the distinctive difference of these states—namely, smallness, whether in their absolute size or power, there is room for us to doubt the applicability of the one-for-all conceptualization of strategic culture on small states’ foreign policy making, especially those without extensive military experience or long history. In the small-state literature, the terms “small,” “weak,” and “insecure” are often used interchangeably.<sup>106</sup> However, an obvious difficulty in devising a research program for “small states studies” is that “small” and “large” are relative concepts, subject to different interpretation.<sup>107</sup> Geser distinguishes three kinds of small state nations: first, substantial smallness refers to the “objective” absolute small size of a country’s resources such as territory or population (e.g. Monaco, Tunisia); second, the relational concept implies relative smallness in comparison to other countries (e.g. Costa Rica vs. U.S., Laos vs. China); and third, attributive smallness denotes the “subjective” small size in the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Miriam Fendius Elman, “The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard,” *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (1995): fn1.

<sup>107</sup> Peter R. Baehr, “Small States: A Tool for Analysis,” *World Politics* 27, no. 3 (April 1975): 456-466.

perception of either oneself or others (e.g., Singapore, Luxembourg).<sup>108</sup> Although resource capabilities necessarily constrain the scope and domain of foreign policy of small states, Koehane argues that “a psychological dimension must therefore be added for the sake of clarity as well as in recognition of the fact that ‘objective reality’ does not determine statesmen’s behavior directly.”<sup>109</sup> In other words, the corresponding “smallness” must be recognized and internalized by the state concerned. This subjective understanding in the perception of either oneself or others necessarily affect how small states act and how others deal with these states. The countries to be selected for this dissertation thus will meet both criteria: objective smallness and self-perceived smallness.

### Strategic Culture and ASEAN

The Southeast Asia states fair poorly in comparison to their Northeast Asian and European peers in attracting scholarly attention in the field of strategic culture study. The only book available on the subject, *The Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*, was edited and published in 1999 by Ken Booth and Russell Trood.<sup>110</sup> The paucity of research can be attributed to the much acclaimed ASEAN Way and how it has been conveniently mistaken as the strategic culture

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<sup>108</sup> Hans Geser, “Was Ist Eigentlich Ein Kleinstaat?” in *Kleinstaaten-Kontinent Europa: Probleme und Perspektiven*, eds. Romain Kirt and Arnos Waschkuhn (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001), 89-100, cited in Iver Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, “Liliputians in Gulliver’s World?” *Working Paper 1* (Iceland: Centre for Small State Studies, May 2004), fn4.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemma: Small States in International Politics,” *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 295.

<sup>110</sup> Booth and Trood, *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*.

of all member states. For the purpose of upholding the sanctity of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Southeast Asian governments have incorporated the principles of consensus-based decision-making and non-intervention into their dealings with neighboring countries. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the regional norms should not be taken as representative of the views of individual member states. More importantly, it is careless, if not incorrect, to assume the uniform institutionalization of the norms by each member state both in terms of scope and extent. If ASEAN way is indeed the representative strategic culture of the region and peaceful resolution of intramural conflict the norm, the initiative to push for further political-security integration should have received higher popularity and support.

### Research Design

For clarification, this paper takes on Mahnken and Glen's definition because both interpretations allow for a rational link to be established between means and ends in a cultured context. Strategic culture is defined as a distinctive set of socialized, internalized, and legitimized beliefs, assumptions, and behavior patterns regarding the appropriate means and ends chosen by members of the national security community to achieve the security objectives of the state<sup>111</sup>.

Strategic community refers to the groups of people responsible for making

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas Mahnken, *United States Strategic Culture* (Fort Belvoir, VA: The Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006), 4; John Glenn, "Realism versus Strategic Culture: Competition and Collaboration?" *International Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (2009): 530.

strategic decisions in a given state.<sup>112</sup> The shared beliefs, assumptions, and behavior patterns over time have attained “a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than policy”<sup>113</sup> through contested socialization, internalization and legitimatization by the strategic community. This strategic culture acts as an intervening variable through which the strategic community derives a permissible boundary to formulate their *ranked* strategies (martial and otherwise) to the security problems at hand.<sup>114</sup>

Other than the rationalist disposition, the Mahnken and Glen definition permits the possibility that strategic culture may be subject to both internal and external forces of contestation and change.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the definition avoids the almost tautological question of “what is context” from the first generation. It also escapes the criticism of over-determinism that is often launched against the third generation scholars. It has been argued that “[s]trategic culture scholars have largely been guilty of assuming the existence of natural, stable and unitary security communities (states) that each possesses a unique strategic culture.”<sup>116</sup> By making strategic culture susceptible to endogenous and exogenous factors, Mahnken and Glen’s conceptualizations correct the tendency of prevailing understandings of strategic culture to presume the continuation of the status quo.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture*, 8.

<sup>114</sup> Christoph Meyer, “Convergence Toward a European Strategic Culture,” 528.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 529.

<sup>116</sup> Lock, “Refining Strategic Culture,” 701.

### *Hypotheses*

This dissertation seeks to explain the lack of cooperative security in Southeast Asia from the premise of strategic culture. Combining the theoretical framework of strategic culture and the empirical findings about small state decision making process, three general hypotheses can be derived along with three subsidiary hypotheses regarding ASEAN states.

First, given that many of the small states are post-World War II creations, such as those found in Southeast Asia, these states may lack the time required for historical or ideational factors to take root. One may contend that the impact of colonialism may still have some lingering effect on the formation of strategic culture. However, as states go through decolonization and eventually claim independence, their security concerns should no longer mirror that of the colonizers and their strategic preferences should adjust accordingly. The configuration of strategic culture in newly formed small states thus should be shaped by factors that reflect the new ideals, conditional responses, and patterns of behaviors shared by the post-colonial national strategic community with regard to foreign and security policies.

In other words, strategic culture of small states may be situationally defined. However, this hypothesis cannot be taken to imply a reaffirmation of the realist argument that the strategic choices of small states are primarily the reflection of external constraints and opportunities irrespective of internal push

and pull.<sup>117</sup> To avoid overburdening the research with trivial variables, this dissertation proceeds with great caution in uncovering potential candidates that may inform the development of strategic culture. As suggested by Gray, in order to merit the rubric “culture,” the variables under consideration must have a somewhat lasting nature and effect even when “[i]ts roots might not be very deep, and the plant might be a recent development...”<sup>118</sup>

H1: In small states where historical experience or historically rooted strategic preferences may be limited, material influences and situational considerations should take precedence over ideational factors in the making of the state’s strategic culture.

H1a: Ideational factors should matter less in ASEAN states’ strategic culture.

It has been traditionally argued that small states, such as those in Southeast Asia, are more sensitive to ongoing developments in the international system due to their limited resources and heightened vulnerability.<sup>119</sup> These countries, characterized by objective smallness and/or self-perceived smallness are essentially “local powers whose demands are restricted to their own and immediate adjacent areas.”<sup>120</sup> We thus surmise that

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<sup>117</sup> T. V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War initiation by Weaker Powers* (New York: Cambridge University press, 1994).

<sup>118</sup> Colin Gray, “Out of the Wilderness: Prime-Time for Strategic Culture,” *Comparative Strategy*, 26, no. 1 (January 2007): 7.

<sup>119</sup> Jeanne A. K. Hey, ed., “Introducing Small State Foreign Policy,” in *Small States in World Politics: Explaining foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004), 5-6.

<sup>120</sup> Annette Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War Two* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 3, fn8.

H2: The content of small state strategic culture should focus primarily on foreign and security policy issues that originate in their neighborhood.

H2a: The formation of ASEAN states' strategic culture should be heavily subject to regional security considerations.

Although institutionalists argue that regional cooperative security arrangements offer small powers various advantages such as transparency, predictability, pooled resources, and joint planning<sup>121</sup>, their willingness to join others in the region and establish some form of cooperative security is a function of how they securitized themselves vis-à-vis each other. Thus, in a highly charged region, a heightened threat perception from the immediate adjacent areas *over time* will lead to the development of a highly reactive and provocative strategic culture.

H3: Small states' threat perceptions from the neighborhood *over time* dictate the formation of strategic culture (provocative vs. cooperative).

H3a: ASEAN states should develop a provocative strategic culture vis-à-vis each other.

In short, the central thesis of this dissertation is that the distinctive attribute of ASEAN states, smallness, has fostered a two-tiered strategic culture. Where threat to the region as a whole has been historically low, the region has socialized, internalized, and legitimized a cooperative strategic culture to engage

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<sup>121</sup> Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka, "Cooperative Security: New Horizon in International Order," *Marshall Center Paper 3* (Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2001).



external pressures. At the state-level where intramural distrust has not receded, the ASEAN states have developed a reactive and provocative strategic culture over time that in turn inhibits the genuine establishment of cooperative security in the region.

### *Operationalization*

Strategic culture is an intervening variable through which the strategic community derives a permissible boundary for formulating their ranked responses to the threat at hand. However, even with the modified definition from Mahnken and Glen, two distinct problems remain. First, the modified definition does not specify what strategic culture comprises. In fact, the literature is equally vague on what aspects of “security” strategic culture is concerned with and how it is internalized by policy makers.

In order for strategic culture to be researchable, Gray argues that the definition of the term and the methodology to be employed ought to be driven by the nature of the subject matter one is trying to find.<sup>122</sup> Suppose the socialized, internalized, legitimized beliefs, assumptions, and behavior patterns are what feed into strategic culture, and the targeted behavioral outcome is a state’s propensity for cooperative security, the rational linkage between the appropriate means and ends chosen by the security community is thus affected, if not determined, by the push and pull of a state’s predispositions to cooperate and conflict.

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<sup>122</sup> Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999b), 132-3.

The two predispositions are proxies for measuring strategic culture. States with higher predisposition to cooperate are expected to participate more willingly in cooperative security regimes (cooperative). On the contrary, states showing a higher tendency for conflict will opt for unitary actions to address security issues (provocative). The assumption of the co-existence of both predispositions allows one to avoid the over-deterministic either-or situation and the possibility of exploring the nuance behind the push and pull of the two predispositions (see figure 2.1 below).

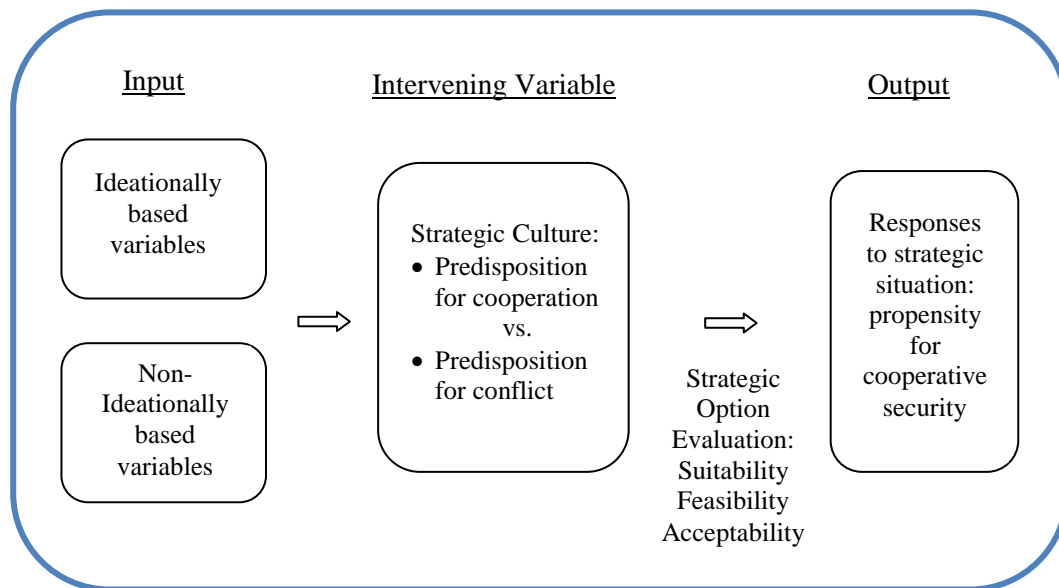


Figure 2.1: Strategic Culture and Propensity for Cooperative Security

Second, the literature provides little clue on how to determine and reduce the wide range of variables that may serve as potential inputs for strategic culture. “Studies under the rubric of ‘strategic culture’ range the spectrum, some focusing

primarily on organizational culture within particular security bureaucracies, and others taking in the entire horizon of ideational and material influences on a country.”<sup>123</sup> Johnston is most adamant in claiming that “ahistorical or ‘objective’ variables such as technology, capabilities, levels of threat and organizational cultures are all of secondary importance: it is the interpretative lens of strategic culture that gives meaning to these variables.”<sup>124</sup> In the American example, Mead singles out the popular ideals of Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Woodrow Wilson as the main conceptual bases for American strategic culture, ideals that have not only been held by the top decision makers but also shared by the population as a whole.<sup>125</sup>

Similarly, Johnson argues that material influences such as access to technology and natural resources are the building blocks of state identity, value, and perception of reality, and thus should be incorporated into ideational factors.<sup>126</sup> In stark contrast, the authors in Booth and Trood’s edited volume place equal weight on ideational and non-ideational variables that may possibly inform the formation of strategic culture.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Johnson, *Strategic Culture*, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 1.

<sup>125</sup> Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, *Strategic Culture*, 11-16.

<sup>127</sup> Booth and Trood, *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*.

Writers on strategic culture, however, have traditionally privileged “ideational” factors over non-ideational ones. Cultural factors are found abundant in many of the enduring great powers. As a result, strategic cultures produced by the existing empirical studies are largely ideationally based, building on historical experiences and historically rooted strategic preferences. In addition, ideational influences in the traditional sense become so expansive and omnipotent that all non-ideational variables are subordinate to ideational ones. Following Booth and Trood’s equal-weight approach, this dissertation leaves open the possibility that ideational factors may be limited in a small state to form the country’s strategic culture, or that, non-ideational influences are at least equally influential as ideational ones.

One contribution this dissertation makes is to identify how strategic culture is processed and adopted by the strategic community in a given state. It is assumed by the literature that strategic culture, if it exists, tends to be automatically internalized by the elites. Morgan was the first researcher to bring in the dimension of government process into his model of strategic culture. However, Morgan wrote vaguely that “[t]he formal structure of that process is a function of the... nation’s form of government.”<sup>128</sup> He did not elaborate on how the process of internalizing strategic culture varies by governments with different political structures. Although he later qualifies his statement by adding that the strategic community “carr[ies] out their deliberations within a social framework

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<sup>128</sup> Morgan, *Compellence and the Strategic Culture of Japan*, 29.

created by the shared scripts that comprise their decision-making custom,” this is not much different from how strategic culture is (subliminally) internalized in the conceptualization of the first generation or third generation scholars.

Analogous to how a corporation makes strategic business decisions, for strategic culture to be internalized, it must go through process of strategic option evaluation (see figure 2.2 below). Government strategic decision making is very similar to corporate or military decision making in which three appraisal criteria are commonly used for strategic option evaluation: suitability, feasibility, and acceptability.<sup>129</sup> In the corporate world, suitability is concerned with whether a strategic option addresses the issues relating to the strategic position of the organization. If a strategic option helps the firm to improve or overcome an existing strategic weakness, such an option would be suitable for implementation. It is thus important to first identify the situation at hand and the current stand on the issue. The proposed actions must be deliverable with the capabilities/resources currently possessed and willingly committed by the state. Strategic options that are not deliverable are of little value with the exception of diversionary policies that are of political utility but offer no real solution to the problem at hand.

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<sup>129</sup> Gerry Johnson, Kevin Scholes, and Richard Whittington, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, 8th edition (New York: Prentice Hall, 2008), 365-382.

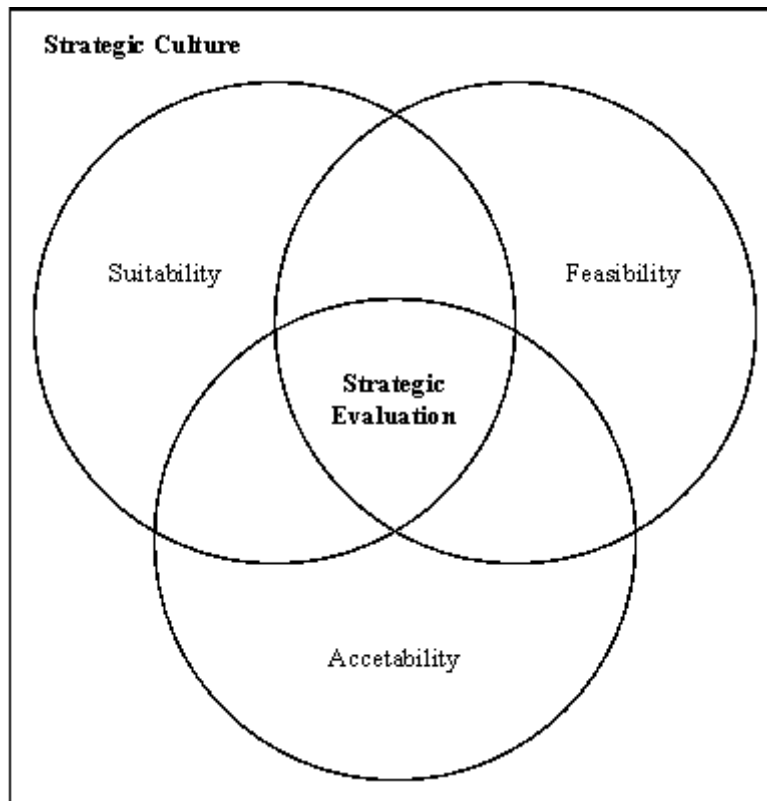


Figure 2.2: Strategic Option Evaluation

Lastly, acceptability is concerned with the expected performance outcome and the extent to which these meet the expectation of the stakeholders (the strategic elites in this case). In public affairs, the chosen policy option must enjoy political support (and public support) to legitimize the course of action, or at the very least enough political backing to withstand opposition and criticism. It is in the last appraisal criterion where strategic culture might exert a stronger influence in the form of bounded rationality as the evaluation of the previous two criteria are more based on objective facts and considerations. The bounded rationality in this context is formed by the recurrent and patterned social arrangements that

appear to subconsciously influence and limit the capacity and opportunity of individual agents to make free choices.<sup>130</sup> For example, if a small state historically holds a strategic culture of cooperation, the strategic elites will be less inclined to accept cost/benefit analysis based on relative gains.

By adding government process and the evaluation criteria to the model, Johnston's oft-criticized non-finding that Ming China had two strategic cultures and the parabellum one was the one seemingly at work can be better explained. To measure against the three criteria, the symbolic Confucian strategic culture only fulfills the first one. Although the Confucian strategic culture enjoyed wide public, scholarly, and political support, it was not suitable to address the strategic environment Ming China faced. As a maritime power, Ming China of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was beset by several continental threats: Mongols to the north, Annam to the south, and Korea to the northeast. The emphasis the Ming court placed on tribute missions over use of force and the priority on building navy over army rendered any course of action inadequate to fend off the continental aggressors. Thus it is no surprise that the parabellum strategic culture took precedence over the Confucian one.

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<sup>130</sup> The concept of bounded rationality, developed by the Nobel laureate Herbert Simon, originally means decision makers, irrespective of their level of intelligence, are faced with three unavoidable constraints when making a decision: 1) information is not always accurate or available; 2) cognitive limitations may affect an individual's capacity to process and evaluate the available information; and lastly 3) there is always time constraint. Therefore, decision makers who intend to make rational choices are bound to make "satisficing" rather than "optimizing" choices in complex situations. See Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man: Social and Rational* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957).

## Methodology

This dissertation proposes to study the strategic culture of small states through a two stage analysis: conceptual and relational content analyses (see discussion below), and process tracing in qualitative case studies. Although small state is the focus of this dissertation, the very same method can be applied to the studies of strategic cultures of any state, large or small. Conceptual and relational content analyses allow us to deconstruct communications that are most relevant to a country's strategic thinking. Another chief advantage of the "unstructuredness" of content analysis data is that "it preserves the conceptions of the data's sources, which structured methods largely ignore."<sup>131</sup> The relationships deduced will then to be analyzed in qualitative case studies through the process tracing method.

## *Case Selections*

Since our goal is to study cooperative security in Southeast Asia through the lens of small state strategic culture, the countries to be selected for case study must meet a combination of these two criteria: objective smallness and self-perceived smallness. Given that there is little research on strategic culture of small states in the Asia Pacific, this paper selects Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia for case study. In fact, only one book chapter is found on the subject for each

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<sup>131</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 2004), 41.



country.<sup>132</sup> The selection of the three countries is justified on the ground that these three small states are among the five founding members of ASEAN. The hypothesized relationships of small state strategic culture and their effect on the receptivity to cooperative security should be most readily manifested in the foreign and security policies of these three states.

Singapore is easy case as it meets both small state criteria. Not only is it a geophysical small state in absolute size, it also perceives itself so and projects itself as regional power without global reach. Thailand will be a hard case as the country is well-known for its long history and war in its past. However, although Thailand has just started to gain international profile in the last two decades, it does not claim to be a regional power. Rather, its security focus is domestically oriented. Malaysia also appears to be a hard case, if not a deviant one because it is certainly not small in absolute geophysical size. While Malaysia sees itself as a “small developing country player in the international arena...,” it is nonetheless one small state with activism and resolve to speak up on issues that other developing countries feel constrained to voice.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> See the chapters for Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia in Booth and Trood, *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region*.

<sup>133</sup>“An Overview of Malaysia’s foreign Policy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, accessed October 23, 2010, [http://www.kln.gov.my/?m\\_id=2](http://www.kln.gov.my/?m_id=2).

### *Text*

The texts to be deconstructed include the annual defense white paper published by the three countries under study. Another set of documents to be content analyzed are chapters in ARF Regional Security Outlook submitted to the ASEAN Regional Forum by each country respectively. These two sets of documents are particularly useful for the study of strategic culture because the content of the documents has direct bearing on the strategic concerns of each state. Annual defense white papers typically spell out a state's security environment, defense capabilities, national defense issues at hand, and measures to address these defense issues. The chapters in ARF Regional Security Outlook contain information on the perceived security threats by each state and their proposed solutions to these problems. Moreover, these two sets of documents provide us with an opportunity to identify the members of the strategic community in each country. Those who have contributed to the making of these two sets of documents are believed to be the decision makers of the state's foreign and security policies. However, with the exception of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand do not publish either set of document consistently. In the case where the desired documents are unavailable, foreign policy statements and national security policy statements from the prime minister's office are used as substitutions. Although there is a real danger that official documents may be white-washed before they become available for public viewing, these documents nevertheless represent the consensus among the members of the strategic community regarding

the permissible boundary within which they contemplate, deliberate, and make strategic policy choices.

### *Conceptual Content Analysis*

Because this dissertation makes no presupposition on which factors inform a country's strategic culture, the search for these inputs, ideational or non-ideational, is necessarily open-ended. Dictionary-based content analysis is best suited for the project. The pre-existing classification scheme allows researchers to map the content of any textual data without the need to customize a new scheme. This not only shortens the time needed to devise a new classification scheme but also strengthens the accuracy and reproducibility of the result. Any dictionary-supplied classification scheme comes with categories followed by a list of words. For example, the category of religion includes words pertaining to religious, metaphysical, supernatural or relevant philosophical materials. Classification schemes vary by the type of dictionary used.

To avoid human coding error, this dissertation utilizes a computer-assisted approach for content analysis of textual data. In particular, this dissertation finds the General Inquirer (GI) software created by Phillip Stone of Harvard University most suitable for the project. General Inquirer performs content analyses with dictionaries based on the Lasswell and Harvard IV-4 dictionaries. The 182 GI categories were developed specifically for social science content analysis research applications. Although Krippendorff and others argued that the assumed category

schemes in the software impose the reality of the investigator on the text, the dictionaries used in this project are considered commonsense category schemes for political analysis rather than the operationalization of a formal theory.<sup>134</sup>

First, each statement will be subject to word count and disambiguation routines for high-frequency English homographs. Since the reliability at all levels of aggregation is found to be substantially less than the reliabilities for specific words or phrase, the recording unit for the preliminary mapping in this project is the word<sup>135</sup>. The assumption is that words that appear frequently in the text reflect important concerns in the text. A disambiguation routine of homographs follows to ensure the correct categorization of words. At this stage, we are only interested in quantifying the words and reducing the text into manageable content categories, not in examining how they are related. The final result is an ordered word-frequency list of disambiguated text.

In addition, General Inquirer conveniently organizes words into eight different institutional categories, representing both ideational and material variables (see table 1 below). A high score (weighted) reflects use of the language of that institution. The disambiguated frequency counts will provide a good starting point to uncover what factor matters the most/least to a country's political elite's strategic culture.

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<sup>134</sup> Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 157.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (New York: Sage Publishing, 1990), 39.

Table 2.1: General Inquirer “Institution” Categories

Material Variables	Economy	510 words of an economic, commercial, industrial, or business orientation, including roles, collectivities, acts, abstract ideas, and symbols, including references to money. Includes names of common commodities in business.
	Politics	507 words having a clear political character, including political roles, collectivities, acts, ideas, ideologies, and symbols
	Military	88 words relating to military matters.
	Legal	192 words relating to legal, judicial, or police matters.
Ideational Variables	Academy	153 words relating to academic, intellectual or educational matters, including the names of major fields of study
	Doctrine	217 words referring to organized systems of belief or knowledge, including those of applied knowledge, mystical beliefs, and arts that academics study.
	Expressive	205 words associated with the arts, sports, and self-expression
	Religion	103 words pertaining to religious, metaphysical, supernatural or relevant philosophical matters.

Source: General Inquirer <http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~inquirer/homecat.htm>

### *Relational content analysis*

However, frequency count is meaningless without contextual interpretation. Especially with ideological and conceptual explanations in mind, Billig commented that “[t]his sort of methodology can count words, but it cannot interpret them. Under some circumstances mere counting can lead to misleading conclusions.”<sup>136</sup> To go beyond the plain word count, a relational content analysis is needed where the relationships between concepts can be defined and classified. After all, “[c]oncepts are ideational kernels that in isolation are devoid of meaning.”<sup>137</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Michael Billig, *Methodology and Scholarship in Understanding Ideological Explanation*, in *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods*, edited by C. Antaki (London: Sage, 1988), 206.

<sup>137</sup> Kathleen Carley, *Case Study & Computing: Advanced Qualitative Methods in the Study of Human Behavior* (New York: Ablex Publishing Corporation, June 1996): 154.

Relational content analysis begins with a concordance on the concepts that appear most frequently in the word count. A concordance is an alphabetical list of the principal words used in the text with their immediate context. The resulting concordance list will be presented in the *key word in context* format, with the aid of KWIC Concordance for Windows, a computer software designed for this purpose. “KWIC lists provide structured information that is helpful in determining whether the meaning of particular words is dependent on their use in center phrases or idiom.”<sup>138</sup> This routine acts as a second filter to disambiguate and analyze words in their specific context.

Based on the resulting concordance, relational analysis can be carried out by analyzing the relationship among categories that frequently appear together (collocation). Unlike conventional qualitative research on strategic culture which tends to plainly describe each factor individually and coequally, the relational analysis here is intended to gauge the relative weight of each factor and how they influence each other. The assumption here is that the relative weight of each factor should reflect its level of importance to the outcome. The difference in importance is apparent in the final ranking of factors. To fully extricate the embedded relationship among factors, three elements will be closely studied: strength, sign, and direction of a relationship.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, 44.

<sup>139</sup> “Writing Guide-Content Analysis,” Colorado University, accessed November 6, 2010. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/content/index.cfm>.

*Strength* of relationship refers to the extent to which two or more concepts are interrelated. Linguistic modifiers such as “must,” “exclusively,” “least,” or “never” signify different levels of interconnectedness between concepts. For example, in the sentence “we *must* consider the geopolitical location of our country in devising the nation’s grand strategy,” the strength of relationship between geopolitical location and grand strategy is strong as one cannot formulate the latter without considering the former. While a continuous (scale) coding scheme may detail intricate relationships between concepts, it is infeasible to assign a numerical value of “strongness” to each modifier. For instance, if we were to assign a numerical value of “strongness” from 0 to 100 to “probably” and “maybe,” the numbers should fall somewhere between 25 to 75. But within this range, it is impossible to assign a more specific number to each modifier. Both modifiers may possibly share the same numerical value, depending on the context. To solve this problem, the strength of relationship is instead approximated by the number of collocation between two words. The assumption is that words that appear frequently in tandem are more strongly related.

After determining the strength of a relationship between concepts, we then look into the *sign* of that relationship. In this process, we try to identify whether the concepts are positively or negatively related. We first identify the presence of sentence-modifier adverb “no” and its declarative form “not” which are perceived to depict a negation of a related statement. In our previous example, “we *must* consider the geopolitical location of our country in devising the nation’s grand

strategy, the absence of negation indicates geopolitical location and grand strategy are positively related. However, the simple negation test may miss relationships that are modified by other adverbs or adverbial clauses. For instance, Satha-Anand finds that in Thai Buddhism, “belief in the Buddha’s teaching coexists with a reverence for local spirits and Hindu gods.” In this sentence, Thai Buddhism is associated positively with folk religion and Hinduism. Concepts with negative signs are considered unrelated and prevented from entering the next stage of relational analysis.

Lastly, to fully determine the relationship between concepts, we need to ascertain the direction of the relationship. *Strength* and *sign* are the two necessary procedures to weed out concepts that have no bearing on each other. At this stage, the data are further reduced into a more manageable size. We are left with concepts that may inform each other in the making of a country’s strategic culture. The concordance list in the *key word in context* format produced earlier is in essence directional-neutral. It is only helpful in identifying the co-occurrence of concepts but not the direction of their relationship, if any. Typical directional relationships include, “X taking place before Y,” “If X then Y,” or “X implies Y.” Directional analysis is exceptionally useful in establishing the impact of one factor on another. For example, in Singapore’s case, “[i]nvasion from the north... is an almost obligatory initiating scenario for Singapore’s wargamers... based as they are on the logic of history and an appreciation of geostrategic realities.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Shuhud Saaid, “The Singapore Armed Forces,” *Asian Defence Journal* (February 1987): 10.



Invasion from the north implies war. More importantly, the deep concern for invasion from the north derives its sources from historical analogy and geostrategic location.

### *Qualitative Case Studies*

One caveat is that this research contains no control. There are no case studies on non-small states with which to compare small state foreign policy behavior. As the literature is full of case studies on larger states, the absence of this control (i.e. case studies on great powers) should not present itself as a methodological predicament. As such, this dissertation follows a “similar case” approach in which researchers examine a series of cases sharing crucial criteria, smallness in this case, and draws conclusions from them. The purpose of the qualitative case studies is to ascertain that the factors and their relationships identified in the content analysis phase do manifest themselves in the process of strategic decision making in each country respectively. The focus here is the internalization of strategic culture in government process. Through process tracing, the case studies provide a means for us to map which, how, and when strategic culture takes effect. According to George and McKeown, process tracing is most adept at “investigat(ing) and explain(ing) the *decision process* by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes.”<sup>141</sup> More specifically, this method “attempts to uncover what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision

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<sup>141</sup> George, Alexander L. and Timothy J. McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making," *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* 2 (1985): 35.

process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; the actual behavior that then occurs; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behavior; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behavior.”<sup>142</sup>

The first case study sets out to examine the strategic option evaluation process in Malaysia and Singapore’s participation in the maritime anti-terrorist multilateral regime, the latest and arguably more pressing addition to ASEAN cooperative security agenda. Simon once observed in 2005 that “there are no ongoing exercises or patrols involving the armed forces of three or more Southeast Asian states that either cross national boundaries or operate on the high seas or in international air space.”<sup>143</sup> It was not until very recently that there appear some joint patrol activities by several littoral states in the Malacca Strait, though prior consultation is still required when entering other’s territorial water.<sup>144</sup> The second case study examines Thailand’s reaction to Cambodia’s efforts at internationalizing the Preah Vihear conflict along the contested Thai-Cambodian border. In particular, this case study explores the rationale of Thailand’s insistence barring third-party mediation and international involvement at the expense of prolonged militarized conflict and mounting casualties. This

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Sheldon Simon, “Southeast Asia’s Defense Needs: Change or Continuity.” in *Strategic Asia 2005-06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, eds. Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asia Research, 2005), 299.

<sup>144</sup> “US Supports Tripartite Malacca Straits Security Arrangements,” *Antara News* (Jakarta), Jan 11, 2011.

dissertation process-traces the strategic decision making process by consulting archival documents and secondary sources.

## Conclusion

In sum, this dissertation sets out to complete three tasks. First, it seeks to map strategic culture in small states. This dissertation challenges the conventional wisdom that strategic culture is mainly ideationally based. The empirical studies have over-privileged ideational factors at the expense of material or situational ones. In small states where historical experience or historically rooted strategic preference is found wanting, material constraints and situational considerations should take precedence over ideational factors. Second, it proposes a two-stage methodological improvement to address which, how, and when strategic culture affects foreign policy outcomes in all states, small or large. The proposed methodological improvement not only gauges the relative weight of the constituent elements of strategic culture through conceptual and relational content analysis but also specifies the internalization of such culture in strategic decision making through process tracing in qualitative case studies. Last but not least, to better understand why there is no concrete cooperative security regime in the region. As Southeast Asia has been labeled the “second front of terrorism,” external powers such as the U.S. have been increasingly pressing the region for enhanced military and security cooperation both bilaterally and multilaterally. However, one should understand, after reading this dissertation, that ASEAN is

not NATO. ASEAN is devoid of genuine trust internally, a prerequisite for security cooperation. Confidence building must precede military cooperation.

## Chapter 3

### SINGAPORE'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

#### Singapore in Southeast Asia

Singapore's objective smallness in territorial size and lack of strategic depth have engendered a continuous official propaganda campaign since its independence to instill the discourses of "smallness," "vulnerability," and "survival" into the psyche of every Singaporean. The challenge to Singapore remains the same as the late Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (Singapore's first Minister of Foreign Affairs) once opined: "our problem is how to make sure that a small island with a teeming population and no natural resources to speak of, can maintain, even increase, its living standards and also enjoy peace and security in a region marked by mutual jealousies, internal violence, economic disintegration and great power conflicts."<sup>145</sup> This vulnerability, firmly believed by the government, will only increase as Singapore becomes more integrated with the global economy.<sup>146</sup>

On this lowland of 710.3 square kilometer there reside of 5.077 million permanent residents and foreign workers.<sup>147</sup> Against the backdrops of its size,

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<sup>145</sup> Sinnathamby Rajaratnam, "Survival," in *The Prophetic and the Political: Selected Speeches and Writings of S. Rajaratnam*, eds. H.C. Chan and O.U. Haq (Singapore: Graham Brash; New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), 211.

<sup>146</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Defending Singapore in the 21st Century* (Singapore: Ministry of Defence 2000), 6.

<sup>147</sup> "Key Annual Indicators," Department of Statistics Singapore, accessed January 3, 2011, <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/>.

lack of natural resources, and a small domestic market, the city-state, via the government-led export oriented development model and heavy state investment in human capital, has upgraded itself from the bottom of the production chain to a distinctive spot in the global division of labor, specializing in higher value-added activities along with the vision of transitioning to a knowledge based economy in the near future. According to the CIA World Factbook, Singapore achieved a real growth rate of 14.70% in 2010, the highest in the region and second in the world.<sup>148</sup> The “Singapore Story”, proudly presented by the government, “is the account of how a small island-nation overcame its vulnerabilities and prospered, despite overwhelming odds.”<sup>149</sup>

Yet, Singapore’s economic success does not bring much security. The constant fear of being encircled in a “sea of Malay” has been exacerbated by the “little red dot” comment made by the former president of Indonesia, Habibie, in an interview with the *Asian Wall Street Journal*: “It’s O.K. with me, but there are 211 million people (in Indonesia). All the green (area) is Indonesia. And that red dot is Singapore.”<sup>150</sup> Its geographic proximities and volatile relationships with larger neighbors, especially Malaysia and Indonesia, compel the island to tighten security across the board. The growing salience of a multitude of unconventional security problems further complicates Singapore’s security environment.

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<sup>148</sup> “Singapore: Economy,” CIA The World Factbook, accessed January 3, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sn.html>.

<sup>149</sup> Ministry of Defence, *The Fight Against Terror: Singapore’s National Security Strategy* (Singapore: Ministry of Defence, 2004), 66.

<sup>150</sup> *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, August 4, 1998.

Given an already harsh security environment and persistent anxiety over new sources of vulnerability such as U.S. strategic retrenchment and new transnational threats,<sup>151</sup> Singapore's participation in multilateral cooperative security regimes is at best selective. It has traditionally relied on the principle of self-reliance and bilateral ties to shore up its defence needs. If any unilateral attempt at seeking security risks a security dilemma which may easily attract suspicion from the neighborhood, why does Singapore remain lukewarm toward cooperative security architecture in the region? Understanding Singapore's strategic culture, characterized by the push and pull between cooperation and conflict, may shed light on how Singapore perceives threats and the policy instruments chosen to tackle existing and future security problems facing the country.

#### Approximating Singapore's Strategic Culture

Once again, the study of "strategic culture" explores how the world views of the political-military decision makers influence their strategic choices at the highest political level" and policy options at the operational or tactical level.<sup>152</sup> At the conflict end is a Hobbesian world of zero-sum competition while the cooperation end exemplifies the Kantian positive-sum (at the very least non zero-

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<sup>151</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: The Search for Regional Order* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2007), 31.

<sup>152</sup> Chin Kin Wah, "Reflecting on the The Shaping of Strategic Cultures," in *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Security*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 4-5.

sum) community (see Figure 3.1 below). Yet, the two extremes on the continuum can only be seen as ideal types and no state can long reside at either end. State's strategic culture is characterized by the push and pull between two opposing forces, the predisposition to cooperation on one end and the predisposition to conflict on the other.



Figure 3.1: Deconstructing Strategic Culture

This dissertation concedes that quantitative measures for any cultural variable have limitation. It is at best an approximation of one part of the culture, strategic culture in this case. However, the numerical representation may be useful for cross-country comparison.

The computer assisted content analysis software, General Inquirer, processed 13 defence and security related documents (see Table 3.1 below) with a total of 83,766 words. These are official documents issued by the Singaporean government at the ministerial level. Speeches by individual political elites are excluded because the speeches may reflect the personal views of the speech giver, not that of the state.



Table 3.1: Singapore Documents to be Content Analyzed

	Document Title	Word Count
1	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2001	1,318
2	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2002	1,533
3	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2003	2,061
4	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2004	2,347
5	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2005	2,869
6	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2007	2,599
7	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2008	2,705
8	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Singapore Chapter 2009	3,497
9	Defence White Paper, The Defence of Singapore 1992-1993	15,218
10	Defence White Paper, The Defence of Singapore 1994	17,839
11	Defence White Paper, Defence Singapore in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century, 2000	15,562
12	Defence White Paper, The Fight Against Terrorism, 2004	13,550
13	Security Policy, Total Defence, 2008	680
	Total	84,845

The first three white papers published by Singapore's Ministry of Defence in 1992, 1994 and 2000 are considered traditional defence white papers. All three documents contain sections on Singapore's defence and security policies, evaluation on the current and future security environment, the state's relations with intra and extra regional powers, and more importantly, information on the Singapore Armed Forces including the roles the Armed Forces play in national defence, military expenditure and procurement plans, order of battle, current stage of revolution in military affairs, and challenges the armed forces are expected to encounter. The 2004 whitepaper responds exclusively to the threat of terrorism in the post-9/11 context. In particular, the document details the organizational changes through the "networking approach" not only in the three services of the Armed Forces but also within the entire government apparatus to better prevent, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks. The 2008 booklet succinctly

summarizes the cornerstone of Singapore's security and defence policy: Total Defence. This document reiterates how the five pillars of Total Defence (psychological, civil, economic, social, and military) may aid the country to strategically deter external threats.

Up till the year 2009, Singapore has regularly submitted three sections in its annual security outlook to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): outlook on regional security, review of existing regional cooperation, and Singapore's contribution to regional security. The latest submission, published in 2009, differs from the previous versions in three ways. First, the conventional outlook on regional security has been broadened to include the perceptions of global security. Second, for the first time, Singapore officially discusses the ARF's role in regional security. In particular, "ARF has moved beyond discussions to more substantive cooperation..." since its inception in 1994. In other words, the ARF has moved beyond its Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) phase and is ready to implement the second phase mandated in the ARF inaugural concept paper, preventive diplomacy.<sup>153</sup> Lastly, the government inserts a short section on its defence policies in the report, briefing the ARF on the core elements of its defence policy and defense spending in the past five years.

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<sup>153</sup> "Singapore Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook* (2009), 110-111.

### *Predisposition to Conflict vs. Predisposition to Cooperate*

GI identifies 2,488 power-conflict related words and 1,267 power-cooperation words. To translate, figure 3.2 (see below) shows the graphical representation of the push and pull between a stronger tendency toward conflict vis-à-vis a weaker inclination to cooperate.

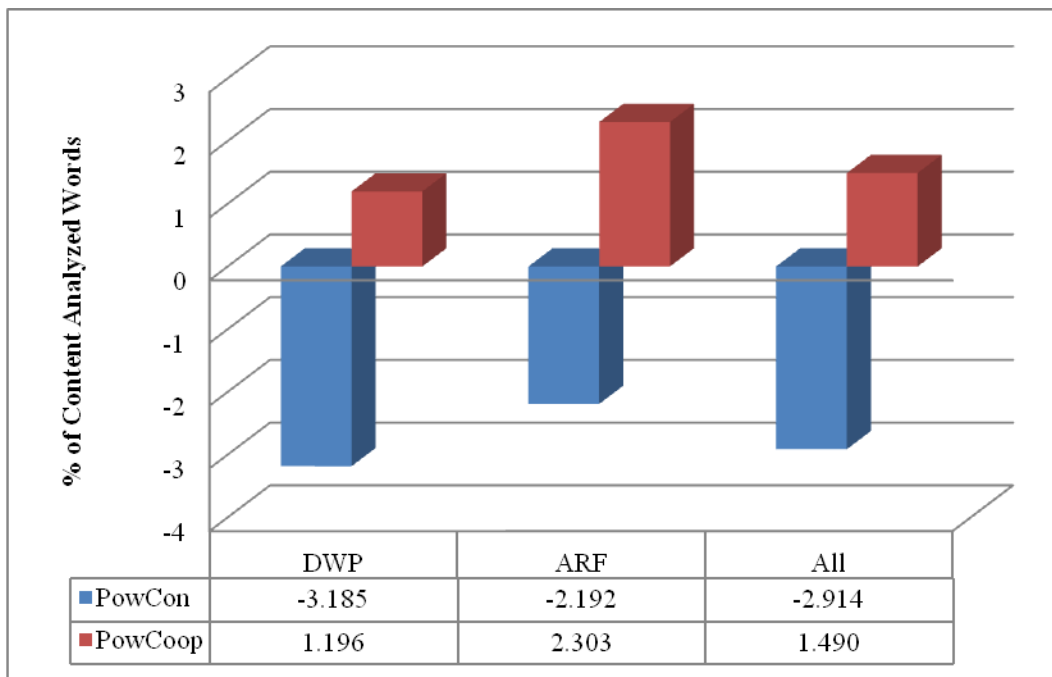


Figure 3.2: Approximating Singapore's Strategic Culture

In the defence white paper category, GI identifies 1,986 power-conflict related words and 746 power-cooperation related words. The tendency to conflict is three times stronger than the predisposition to cooperation. One can reasonably argue that the higher usage for power-conflict related words can be attributed to the fact that defence white papers by nature describe defence and military matters.

The allusion to and usage of “words martial” may not be taken directly as a country’s intent. Yet, one should also be reminded that as the types of “insecurity” multiply, terrorist attacks for instance, political elites’ mindset to handle these “new” threats also expanded. Therefore, the policy options of the state are no longer restricted exclusively to military instruments. In fact, a quick survey of the defence white papers does provide a strong impression of Singapore’s effort for and commitment to multilateral mechanisms whenever transnational security issues arise.

Nevertheless, the tendency to cooperate may still be not strong enough to cancel out the negative effect of the predisposition to conflict in the ARF documents. This finding is unexpected since ARF member states, especially Singapore, frequently point to the need for regional cooperation to handle all sorts of security problems. In this batch of documents, GI identifies 1,841 power-cooperation related words and 1,940 power-conflict related words. This result is surprising given that states adhering to the ASEAN Way principles such as consensus decision making/agenda setting, non-interference in others’ internal affairs, or non-use of force to solve inter-state problems, are expected to utilize a higher percentage of power-cooperation related words. ARF documents are accessible to all member states.

## The Constituent Elements of Singapore's Strategic Culture

The constituent elements of Singapore's strategic culture and their relative weight are gauged first by subgrouping the 83,766 words into eight General Inquirer institutional categories, four of which are ideational and the other four material (see figure 3.3 below). Ideational categories include religion, personal expression, doctrine and academia. Non-ideational ones include politics, military, legal, and economy. Relational content analysis then identifies key words that appear most frequently in each category and qualitatively explore the connection these key words have with each others.

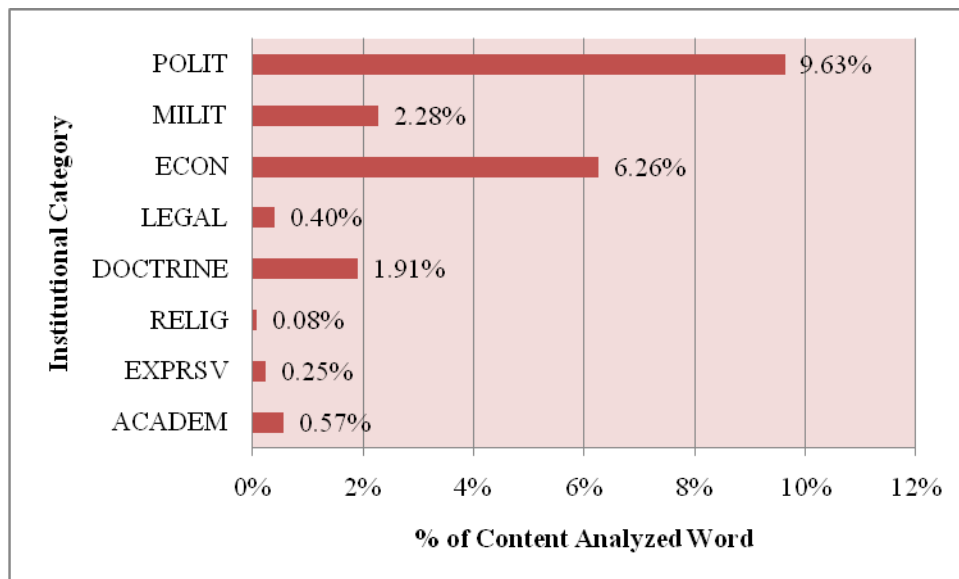


Figure 3.3: Singapore, Content by Institutional Category

## *Ideational Factors*

### DOCTRINE

The institutional category, *DOCTRINE*, refers to any organized systems of belief or knowledge, including those of applied knowledge, mystical beliefs, and arts that academics study. Words such as astronomy, conservatism, medicine, and utopian fall under this broad institutional category. GI identifies 1,620 words in this category. Notably, the term “technology” and its associated terms appear most frequently with a total of 195 in this category. Through disambiguation and collocation, technology and the idea of being technologically sophisticated are found positively and strongly related to defence (see Figure 3.4 below).

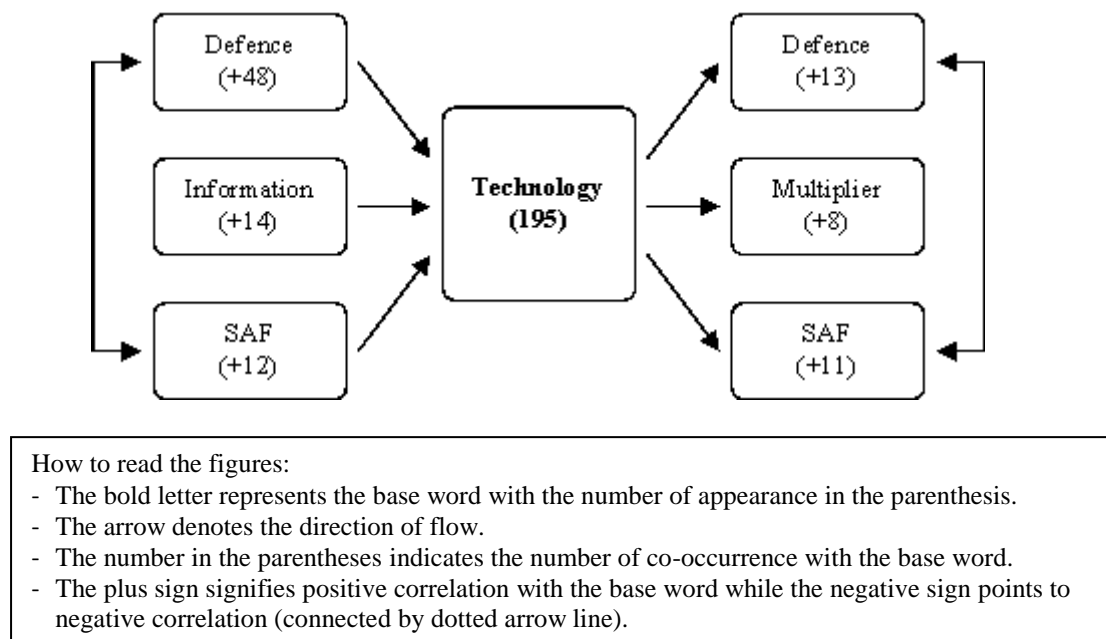


Figure 3.4: Collocation of “Technology”

As early as 1992, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) justified heavy investment in defence technology and the development of a domestic defence industry by arguing that technology as a force multiplier is imperative for Singapore to overcome the challenges of limited manpower and natural resources.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, the “new American way of war” amply demonstrated in the Gulf War, and again, in the ongoing war on terror led Singapore to conclude that “defence technology won the day for the coalition forces despite the fact that they faced a numerically stronger foe...”<sup>155</sup> The need for defence necessitates the attainment of advanced military technology. Defence is later reinforced by the introduction of such technologies into the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

Upon a closer look, other than gaining battlefield advantage, the preoccupation with technological sophistication can be attributed to the real concern over the decreasing birthrate of an already small population: “[w]hat is lacks in numbers, because of Singapore’s small population, it more than makes up for by exploiting defence technology to yield the force multiplier.”<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, more emphasis has been given to the indigenous development of “smart” technologies in the areas of stealth technology, unmanned technology, information technology, advanced computer modeling and simulators, protective technology, stand-off precision weaponry, and enhanced lift and endurance

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<sup>154</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1992-1993*, 52.

<sup>155</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1994*, 58.

<sup>156</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1994*, 58.

capabilities.<sup>157</sup> In particular, information technology is of critical importance to Singapore's counter-terrorist capability as the Internal Security Department employs IT forensic techniques to discover useful intelligence leads. Information technology is also an important domain of SAF modernization for the third generation force (see discussion below). The establishment of the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA), a statutory board set up under the MINDEF, represents a major thrust of the government to better coordinate the implementation of defence technology plans, defence material procurement, and defence infrastructure development on the principle of self-reliance.

## RELIG

The institutional category, *RELIG*, contains words pertaining to religious, metaphysical, supernatural or relevant philosophical matters. Words such as church, providence, orthodox, and spiritual are subsumed under this category. Of the 84,845 words analyzed, GI filters out 69 words belonging to this category. Although the word "religion" and its related words such as "religious" and "religions" appear 27 times, relational content analysis cannot discern any meaningful connection these words have with other vocabularies. Religion is mentioned on a few occasions when domestic cohesion is concerned. To Singapore, domestic cohesion is largely based on racial and religious harmony. The government's efforts at Social Defence, one arm of Singapore's Total

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<sup>157</sup> *Defence Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 46-48.



Defence strategy, focuses primary on educating its citizens on how sensitivity to the culture, tradition, and religion of one another will be conducive to strengthening ties across different ethnic groups in Singapore.<sup>158</sup>

Alternatively, it is possible that religion is purposely underplayed in defence and security policies to avoid unnecessarily stirring up racial and religious discord. The comment of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1986 regarding the Malay Singaporean's strong allergic reaction to the visit of the Israeli President, Herzog, is still apropos: "... in certain circumstances, the Malay Singaporean reacts with the emphasis on Malay/Muslim rather than Singaporean."<sup>159</sup> Racial tension and associated religious conflict are also apparent in the armed forces. The response of then Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, now the Prime Minister of Singapore, to the underemployment of Malay-Singaporeans in higher ranking SAF positions is quoted repeatedly by the media as a reminder of the precarious racial and religious balance that characterized Singapore's internal stability: "...we do not want to put any of our soldiers in a difficult position where his emotions for the nation may be in conflict with his religion..."<sup>160</sup> These two popular, yet provocative, remarks are in stark contrast to Rajaratnam's famous speech to the United Nations when the country was accorded UN membership in 1965: "We think of ourselves not as exclusively a

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<sup>158</sup> *Total Defence* 2008, 7.

<sup>159</sup> *The Strait Times*, December 15, 1986.

<sup>160</sup> *The Strait Times*, February 23, 1987.

Chinese, an Indian, or a Malay society but as a little United Nations in the making.”<sup>161</sup>

Notably in the 2004 Defence White Paper in which terrorism is the underlying theme, the government is careful about its wordings when it comes to religion. Terrorism, asserted by the government, “is an ideology based upon a gross misreading of Islamic religious... It debases concepts like Jihad.”<sup>162</sup> Given that Al Qaeda and other extremist terrorist groups have wrongfully rationalized their action in the name of Islam, former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 urged all Muslims in Singapore not to “allow the extremists and militants to set the Islamic agenda.”<sup>163</sup> In many occasions, only specific terrorist groups that might be of security concern to Singapore and their “evil deeds” are noted in official documents. For example, MINDEF warned that “Singapore is a target of JI activity because of its place as part of the *Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara* - a conception rooted in history and myth of a pan-Islamic superstate comprising much of South-east Asia<sup>164</sup>. Similarly, Singapore’s discussion of terrorism in various ARF Annual Security Outlooks places emphasis

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<sup>161</sup> S. Rajaratnam, “Principles of Singapore’s Foreign Policy,” in *The Little Red Dot: Reflection by Singapore’s Diplomats*, eds. Tommy Koh and Chang Li Lin (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2005), 39.

<sup>162</sup> *The Fight Against Terror*, 28.

<sup>163</sup> “Prime Minister’s National Day Rally 2002 Speech, 18 August 02,” Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, accessed January 4, 2011, [http://www.mha.gov.sg/news\\_details.aspx?nid=MjA4-OoIshwLg%2bn4%3d](http://www.mha.gov.sg/news_details.aspx?nid=MjA4-OoIshwLg%2bn4%3d).

<sup>164</sup> *The Fight Against Terror*, 59.

on what has been done to tackle the problem instead of mentioning any specific religion even in passing.

## EXPRSV

The institutional category, *EXPRSV* is associated with arts, sports, and self-expression. Words such as aesthetics, creative, imagination, and spectator fall under this category. GI identifies 210 words in this category. However, through careful collocation and disambiguation, no meaningful connections between any pair of vocabularies are deduced. It is understandable that security and defence related documents would have little discussion of arts and sports. Forms of entertainment and leisure activities are mentioned sporadically when the daily life of soldiers, the National Servicemen (NSmen), is showcased. For example, clubhouses and resorts were built to promote *esprit de corps* among NSmen wherein soldiers may “enjoy a wide range of sports, social and recreational facilities as well as educational and leisure courses and activities.”<sup>165</sup>

Reference to self-expression or individualism is absent. On the contrary, collective will, a sense of emotional attachment to the country, and the beliefs that Singapore is worth defending and more importantly, defendable, are accentuated throughout to muster loyalty and patriotism toward the country.<sup>166</sup> It is strongly pointed out by the 2000 Defence White Paper that when it comes to defence,

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<sup>165</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1993-1994*, 32.

<sup>166</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1992*, 13.

everyone has a part to play, not just the armed forces. In other words, the continued survival and security of the nation rest not only on money, material and machines available, but also the “heartware” of every Singaporean to the defence of the state.<sup>167</sup>

## ACADEM

The institutional category, *ACADEM*, groups together words relating to academic, intellectual or educational matters, including the names of major fields of study. Out of 84,845 words processed, GI isolates 527 words under this category. Through disambiguation and collocation, relational content analysis discovers linkages between “research” (and its associated form, “researcher(s)”) and three other vocabularies (see Figure 3.5 below). First of all, research is always associated with development. The pair of words mostly references the Singaporean government’s endeavor at establishing as well as strengthening domestic Research and Development (R&D) capability in defence technology. The twin discourse of “survival” and “vulnerability” propel the government to focus on defence technologies that will give Singapore a critical edge when countering both military and non-military threats. In fact, Singapore consistently invests about 4% of defence spending in R&D.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Defence Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 76.

<sup>168</sup> “Speech by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean at the Committee of Supply Debate 2010,” Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), Singapore, accessed January. 6, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news\\_and\\_events/nr/2010/mar/05mar10\\_nr2/05mar10\\_speech.html#p6](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news_and_events/nr/2010/mar/05mar10_nr2/05mar10_speech.html#p6).

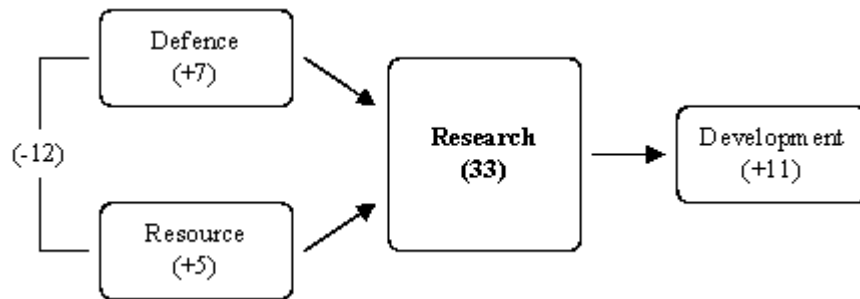


Figure 3.5: Collocation of “Research”

Yet, the “smallness” in resources (money, material, and manpower) unavoidably constrains the government’s ability prioritize military procurement over other national developmental needs. As a result, the Singapore government pegs its defence budget at 6% of the GDP, based not on threat perceptions or the economic wellbeing of the state, but to reflect “the point of view that defence is investment and not expense, that it is insurance and not consumption.”<sup>169</sup> SAF has opted for “the spiral development approach, which is characterized by a flexible outlook on defence procurement. With no fixed end point, each procurement process feeds into the next and is continuously refined to achieve the most optimal material defence capability.”<sup>170</sup> According to Teo Chee Hean, the Minister “for” Defence, there are three general rules of thumb regarding SAF

<sup>169</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1992*, 46.

<sup>170</sup> Business Monitor International, *Singapore Defence and Security Report Q4 2009* (London: Business Monitor International, October 2009), 68.

capital expenditure.<sup>171</sup> First, any acquisition of a new weapon system is strictly on a need-basis. Second, to obtain the most cost-effective result, the life cycle of existing systems is extended through routine maintenance and upgrades with modern technologies. Third, where possible, second hand systems are purchased, altered, and upgraded to fit domestic needs.

### *Non-Ideational Factors*

#### **POLIT**

The institutional category, *POLIT*, refers to words having a clear political character, including political roles, collectivities, acts, ideas, ideologies, and symbols. Words such as Asia, federal, propaganda, and suffrage are examples of this category. In the 13 documents processed, GI identifies 8,170 repeated POLIT words out of a total of 85,845 words. Several clusters of words stand out and connect through a web of positive and negative linkages (see figure 3.6 below). First, feeding into “defence” is a group of words representing one pillar of Singapore’s defence and security policy, Total Defence.<sup>172</sup> The introduction of this umbrella defense concept in 1984, based on the Swiss and Swedish models, can be attributed to two situational drivers: 1) the inability to maintain a regular force in light of Singapore’s small population and declining birthrate; and 2) the

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<sup>171</sup> “Speech by Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean, at Committee of Supply Debate 2009,” MINDEF, Singapore, accessed November 24, 2010, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/news\\_and\\_events/nr/2009/feb/12feb09\\_speech/12feb09\\_speech3.print.html?Status=1](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/content/imindef/news_and_events/nr/2009/feb/12feb09_speech/12feb09_speech3.print.html?Status=1).

<sup>172</sup> For information on Singapore’s Total Defence doctrine, see <http://www.totaldefence.sg>.

changing nature of threats and warfare, especially transnational and non-conventional.

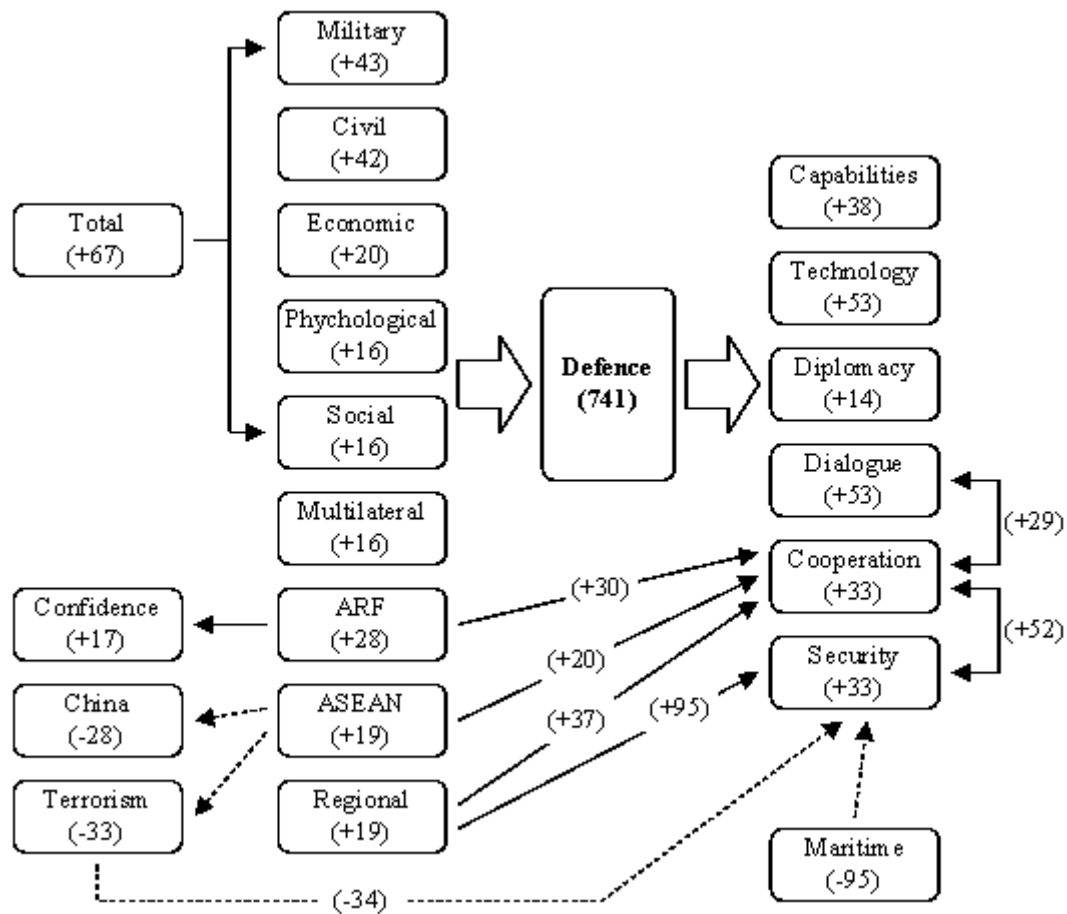


Figure 3.6: Collocation of “Defence”

In a nutshell, this comprehensive security strategy, covering five aspects of defence, is designed to provide an integrated, synergistic, and seamless response to external threats, military or otherwise. The Singapore Armed Forces is the military arm of Total Defence. The primary role of the military is to deter aggression. However, it will fight and win swiftly and decisively over an

aggressor should deterrence fail. The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and trained volunteers are tasked with disaster relief, whether natural or man-made. During peacetime, SCDF is also responsible for raising public awareness of new forms of threats to national security and the appropriate responses civilians can take should the threats materialize. Other than staying competitive economically, Economic Defence places emphasis on policies and measures that will help the domestic economy withstand external shocks during crisis times. Social Defence stresses maintaining internal stability through community building in a multi-racial and religious society. Social cohesion can be further strengthened if citizens are in the habit of helping each other regardless of their race, language, religion, age or nationality. Lastly, Psychological Defence aims not only at nurturing patriotism and loyalty in Singaporeans but more importantly, the resolve and mental preparedness to overcome challenges as individuals and as a society in time of difficulties. Overall, Singaporeans need to believe that Singapore is defensible and the country is worth defending. Everyone has a part to play when it comes to defending the country.

Although in theory the five components should weigh equally and reinforce one another, the defence white papers mostly focus on how to strengthen the military part of Total Defence. The size of the military budget and the apparent resilience in the face of recessions lead one observer to claim that “Military Defence appears to be the centerpiece of Total Defence while other



components function as auxiliary ones.”<sup>173</sup> In fact, it is the official MINDEF position not to cut back defence expenditure during economic downturns because threats do not decrease or disappear when economic growth is slow. The constant investment approach in defence and the pegged ceiling of 6% GDP for defence spending also imply that no sharp increase is permissible. On the whole, the interactive and synergistic effect of Total Defence has yet to be seen.

In light of relatively high spending on Defence, the increasing salience of terrorism and the fear factor it creates has propelled the government to further shore up the Civil Defence component through organizational transformation. The previous emphasis on disaster relief has been broadened to include measures that will better prevent, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks. Specifically, the 2004 *Defence White Paper: The Fight Against Terror* outlines the replacement of the hierarchical organization structure with a lateral network approach.<sup>174</sup> Traditionally, various ministries share jurisdiction and responsibility over security related issues. Yet, the resources, capabilities, and expertise needed to deal with transnational terrorism mandate the convergence of the previously separated and independent government agencies. To cultivate a culture of collaboration, a new National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS) has been set up within the Prime Minister’s office in 2004 to better organize the various agencies around policy coordination, operational coordination, and capability

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<sup>173</sup> Adrian W. J. Kuah, “25 Years of Total Defence in Singapore: Revisiting the Assumptions,” *RSIS Commentaries* (Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, February 6, 2009).

<sup>174</sup> *The Fight Against Terror*, 37.

development coordination.<sup>175</sup> Several key measures fall under the purview of this new security architecture: intelligence sharing, border control, protection of critical infrastructure and key installations, land transport security, aviation security, maritime security, and response capabilities to both conventional and non-conventional threats. Overall, the high level of interest in future contingencies and the preoccupation, if not obsession, with risk assessment and horizon scanning have led to the development of a culture of preparedness and long range planning.<sup>176</sup>

Whereas Total Defence epitomizes Singapore's internally oriented defence approach, the next cluster of words represents Singapore's externally oriented approach to defence through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Bilateral defence ties are deepened through joint exercises and training programs, exchange visits, professional seminars and cross-attendance of military courses.<sup>177</sup> In effect, the SAF has engaged in regular joint exercises with almost every military in the Asia-Pacific region. The least expected is a series of joint counter-terrorism training exercises with the People's Liberation Army of China starting in late 2009.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> For the jurisdiction, organization structure, and activities of National Security Coordination Secretariat, see NSCS homepage [www.nscs.gov.sg](http://www.nscs.gov.sg).

<sup>176</sup> Justin Zorn, "Different Lenses on the Future: U.S. and Singaporean Approaches to Strategic Planning," *RSIS Working Paper Series* 186, (Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, November 2009), 1-5.

<sup>177</sup> *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, p. 85.

<sup>178</sup> Lester Kok, "SAF, PLA in Joint Exercise," *The Strait Time* (Singapore), November 20, 2010.

In comparison to the multitude of bilateral ties, Singapore laments the relative underdevelopment of multilateral dialogue and cooperation among defence establishments in the region, especially in the area of practical cooperation.<sup>179</sup> While understanding any multilateral defence cooperation is more difficult to come by, the government has focused on strengthening existing ones such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, the Shangri-La Dialogue, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM), and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Interestingly, in its discussion on FPDA, to date the longest standing multilateral defence arrangement in the region, MINDEF acknowledges the indivisibility of the defence of Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>180</sup> Support for multilateral arrangements notwithstanding, Singapore has not raised the issue of creating a region wide security pact, or even a security commitment. Rather, its participation in multilateral cooperation is functionally based, mostly restricted to Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HARD).

The ASEAN Regional Forum is seen by Singapore as a vehicle for confidence building measures (CBMs) through dialogues and less of a channel for actual comprehensive security cooperation. Absent from the Forum's agenda are the many bilateral disputes between the ASEAN states. In fact, Singapore rarely alludes to issues such as disputed borders and overlapping Exclusive Economic

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<sup>179</sup> *Defending Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 21.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Zones (EEZs), racial and religious tensions, or latent competition for resources and influence. Instead, the ARF is a regional platform for discussions of issues of “common concern which cannot be tackled on a bilateral basis...”<sup>181</sup> As a matter of fact, ARF’s limitation in conflict management and conflict resolution is duly noted by Jayakumar, former Minister of Foreign Affairs: “ARF helps to cushion tensions and manage difficulties. It might not be able to solve disputes or prevent the outbreak of conflict, but can minimize their impact.”<sup>182</sup> One wonders how Singapore can conclude that the ARF has gone beyond CBMS and is ready to move into Preventive Diplomacy, the second phase mandated by the ARF Concept Paper of 1994.<sup>183</sup>

The ARF’s limitation in conflict management and conflict resolution has led Singapore to discuss its security concerns more within ASEAN. Ever since its 2001 Annual Security Outlook, Singapore has consistently identified China as one source of uncertainty. Singapore finds discomfort in the ups and downs of China’s relations with the U.S. and Japan. Singapore deems this triangular relationship among the three major powers fundamental to regional stability. Next, although the relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait has much improved, the possibility of confrontation cannot be permanently excluded. Lastly, China’s

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<sup>181</sup> “Singapore Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 110.

<sup>182</sup> *The Strait Time* (Singapore), July 26, 2001

<sup>183</sup> “Singapore Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 111.

position on the competing claims over the Spratly Islands is of concern both to Singapore and other claimants.

Other than China, terrorism is often discussed within ASEAN in the context of regional security. Singapore believes its peace and prosperity is inextricably linked to regional stability. After all, given the lack of strategic depth, any internal unrest on the island would be affected and exacerbated by external threats. In Singapore's opinion, the ever-present threat of terrorism has served as "a galvanizing factor providing further impetus to regional co-operation."<sup>184</sup> Counter-terrorism is one area where ASEAN member states are more actively and collaboratively involved. Most notably, ASEAN Leaders signed the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines, in 2007. The Convention signifies the "first region-wide, legally binding anti-terrorism pact" with mandatory compliance to all relevant UN Conventions and Protocols regarding Counter-Terrorism.<sup>185</sup> According to the ASEAN Secretariat, the Convention is still awaiting ratification from at least six ASEAN Member States before it can be elevated to the status of a regional treaty. To date only four countries has done so with Cambodia being the latest addition to ratify the Convention in June 2010 following Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> "Singapore Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2002*.

<sup>185</sup> "Singapore Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 113.

<sup>186</sup> "Cambodia Ratifies the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism," ASEAN Secretariat, July 2, 2010, accessed September 25, 2010, <http://www.aseansec.org/24846.htm>.

Of the various forms of terrorist attack, Singapore has identified maritime security as the most pressing issue facing the country. Unimpeded sea lines of communication (SLOC) is the lifeline of Singapore's export oriented economy. To more effectively police Singapore's territorial waters, the government has reorganized its coastal command in early 2009 and established a new Maritime Security Task Force (MSTF) uniting four existing agencies: the Maritime Port Authority; the Police Coast Guard; the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, and Customs.<sup>187</sup> Singapore has also bolstered maritime domain awareness by setting up an Information Fusion Center (IFC) at the Changi Command and Control Center.<sup>188</sup>

In addition to force restructuring, Singapore is eager to push forward practical cooperation in joint patrols in the Malacca Strait, one of the world's maritime chokepoints. A regional consensus over cooperation in maritime security has emerged around three principles: a) the primary responsibility for the security of regional waterways lies with the littoral states; b) the international community, including the user states and bodies like the International Maritime Organization (IMO), have an important role to play; and c) new cooperative measures should be developed in line with international law.<sup>189</sup> Pursuant to these

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<sup>187</sup> "News: SAF sets up integrated maritime security task force," MINDEF, Singapore, February 23, 2009, accessed December 12, 2010, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/news/2009/February/23feb09\\_news.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/news/2009/February/23feb09_news.html).

<sup>188</sup> For IFC organizational structure, key tasks, and operational models, see IFC homepage <https://www.infofusioncentre.gov.sg>.

<sup>189</sup> "Singapore Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 113.

principles, the Malacca Strait Patrol was launched in July 2004, followed by the “Eye in the Sky” maritime air patrol in September 2005. The Standard Operating Procedures governing both joint patrols were signed by the Chiefs of Defence Force of Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia in April 2006. An Information Sharing Center has also been instituted in Singapore under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), the first ever inter-government agreement to enhance maritime security in regional water.

Overall, bilateral cooperation coupled with multilateral dialogues under ASEAN and ARF are positively reinforcing each other to bring about an extra layer of defence for the region at large and Singapore in particular. The diplomatic effort at securing these intricate ties is indicative of Singapore’s commitment to pursue good relations with friendly nations, another major pillar of Singapore security policy. Yet, Singapore’s activism in extending dialogues with friendly nations and participation in functional cooperation cannot be casually taken as Singapore being accommodating. The perennial emphasis on military capability building with technology as force multiplier reflects a realist worldview shared by the government elites that has not changed since Singapore’s independence. Eternal vigilance and combat readiness underwrite the survival of small states. This is most evident in a speech given by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong just days after his appointment:

“One thing which isn’t going to change is our approach to external relations... We seek to be friends with all countries and especially with our immediate neighbors and the major powers..., but that doesn’t mean we can always accommodate the views or the positions of other countries. When our vital interests are at stake, we must quietly stand our ground.”<sup>190</sup>

## MILIT

Closely related to *POLIT* is the institutional category of *MILIT*, a group of words relating to military matters. For instance, words such as armor, force, stronghold, and weapon are part of this category. Of the 13 documents processed, GI singles out 1,932 words with clear military character. Since there are only 88 base vocabularies in this category, the number of *MILIT* words discovered by GI may not adequately reflect the weight of this constituent element in Singapore’s strategic culture.

Relational content analysis identifies a cluster of words centering on the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) through a web of reinforcing linkages (see figure 3.7 below). The SAF is the military component of the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), as well as the military arm of Singapore’s Total Defence strategy. It comprises the Army, the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). The SAF is headed by the Chief of Defence Force with the assistance of the Joint Staff and the Chief of each service. On top of the three services, a joint Special Operational Task Force was launched in July

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<sup>190</sup> Lee Hisen Loong, cited in Gretchen Liu, *The Singapore Foreign Service: The First 40 Years* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005), 209.



2009. Singapore has maintained a conscript force of 50,000 regulars (40,000 in the Army, 8,000 in the RSAF, and 4,000 RSN) and 250,000 reservists (National Servicemen). A para-military force of 12,000 Police and some 100,000 People's Defence Force (reserves) are also present.<sup>191</sup> While the defence budget is pegged at 6% of Singapore's Gross Domestic Product, Singapore has found it sufficient to spend between 4.5% to 5% on defence over the past five years.<sup>192</sup>

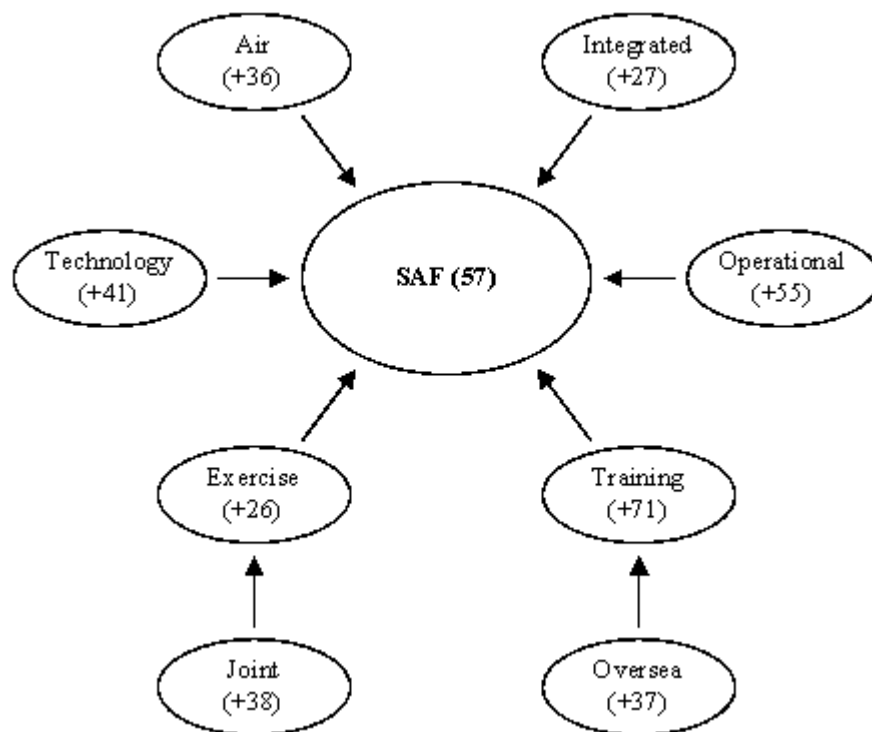


Figure 3.7: Collocation of "SAF"

<sup>191</sup> Marvin Leibstone, "Singapore and Defence: Programmes and Equipment Acquisition," *Military Technology* 34, no. 2 (2010): 20-23.

<sup>192</sup> *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 116.

In light of a fluid security environment, the government firmly believes that to credibly defend the country, the principle of self-reliance must be paramount. “Unlike some other countries, Singapore does not roll over and play dead *when* threatened with a gun. It can and will fight back, effectively, ruthlessly.”<sup>193</sup> To face threats of all types, the SAF has never ceased to improve its operational readiness through constant training. In addition, the latest thrusts at enhancing combat readiness include the adoption of integrated warfare doctrine and the transformation of the entire armed forces into the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation SAF.

In terms of threat perception, Singapore has generally seen the regional security environment to be favorable. The government has identified several conventional threats to the region but recognizes that none constitutes an existential threat to its continued survival and independence. Diplomatic endeavors can help lessen security concerns over the intricate dynamics among China, the U.S. and Japan, potential military conflict over the Taiwan Strait, the North Korean nuclear threat, military rule in Myanmar, resource competition in an increasingly interdependent world, and several territorial disputes in the region. Interestingly, although Singapore has expressed concerns elsewhere about the recent military build-up in the region, this issue is not raised in either ARF or ASEAN.<sup>194</sup> Relationships with neighbors, especially Malaysia and Indonesia,

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<sup>193</sup> *The Straits Times*, 28 March 1991, cited in *The Fight Against Terror*, 21.

<sup>194</sup> Benedict Ang Kheng Leong, “Understanding the Security Environment in Southeast Asia : A Key to Analysing the Arms Build-up,” *Pointer: Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces* 26, no. 2 (2000), accessed January 3, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2000/Vol26\\_2/6.htm](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2000/Vol26_2/6.htm)

also escape perusal. Nonetheless, the existence of these conventional threats led Singapore to justify force modernization and equipment acquisition for “regionally based defence needs.”<sup>195</sup>

The more pressing challenges to regional security at large and Singapore in particular, however, lie with transnational and non-conventional threats, terrorism to be exact. In Singapore’s evaluation, the current trend of transnational terrorism is “strategic” with demonstrated global reach, sophisticated methods, and catastrophic outcomes.<sup>196</sup> Given the uncertain and unpredictable nature of terrorist attacks, the government unusually warned its citizens about the impossibility of attaining “absolute security” even with Total Defence in place.<sup>197</sup> Minister of Home Affairs, Wong Kan Seng, made the remark when addressing the parliament that “... no one can guarantee that a terrorist attack will not happen here. Our approach must be to make it extremely difficult for terrorists to carry out their evil deeds while at the same time, be well prepared and ready to deal with the repercussions if such an attack does happen.”<sup>198</sup> Seen in this light, combat readiness is of critical importance for a country with no strategic depth and reaction time if it were ever to come under attack.

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<sup>195</sup> *Defence of Singapore 1992*, p. 64.

<sup>196</sup> *The Fight Against Terror*, p. 12.

<sup>197</sup> *The Fight Against Terror*, p. 30.

<sup>198</sup> “Minister for Home Affairs Wong Kan Seng Addressing Parliament on 14 March 2003 ” cited in *The Fight Against Terror*, p. 12.

Overall, operational readiness has three main components: immediate response, rapid mobilization, organizing and training just as in war.<sup>199</sup> Other than those deployed overseas, SAF regulars in the three services are on standby round the clock, fully armed, well equipped, and ready to go into action at short notice. The “networked” organization structure of the three services enables not only the speedy sharing of information but also the rapid mobilization of manpower, weapons, and logistics support. The reservists can also be mobilized through silent mobilization (discreet in-person activation) or open mobilization (using mass media channels).<sup>200</sup> Lastly, the SAF and on occasion the reserve force train in wartime scenarios. Full troop exercises are conducted up to division level. Oversea training and joint exercises with friendly foreign forces make up for limited training facilities in Singapore as well as the lack of actual battle experience.

Again, because of the lack of strategic depth and reaction time, Singapore depends greatly on airborne early warning systems for threat alert.<sup>201</sup> To better shore up its air defence, Singapore purchased four Gulfstream 550-Airborne Early Warning (G550-AEW) aircraft in early 2009 to replace the aging E2-C aircraft acquired from the U.S. in the 1980’s.<sup>202</sup> The addition of the new platforms

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<sup>199</sup> *Defending Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 38-39.

<sup>200</sup> *The Defence of Singapore 1992*, 23.

<sup>201</sup> *Defending Singapore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 38.

<sup>202</sup> Sherlyn Quek, “News: RSAF Set to See Farther with New Early-Warning jet,” *CyberPioneer: Web Publication of the Singapore Armed Forces*, February 24, 2009, accessed November 8, 2010.

signifies the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF)'s transformation into a 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation, "networked" Air Force. The G550-AEW is capable of flying at a higher operating attitude of 41,000 feet with longer endurance of nine hours. Equipped with a state-of-the-art mission suite that includes an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, the G550-AEW is able to detect a longer range beyond 200 nautical miles. With the help of these "sharper eyes," improved capability in surveillance will strengthen the RSAF's situational awareness and give them greater response time to deal with any aerial threat.

Force modernization is not limited to the Air Force only. The Singapore Armed Forces are currently undertaking a wholesale, "information-led Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)." It seeks to transform itself into the so called 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation (3G) Force with a new doctrinal emphasis on "integrated warfare." The campaign has three operational focuses: 1) The three services should be interconnected operationally and be able to fight cooperatively through integrated command and control across the whole SAF; 2) Holistic improvement is sought across a wide range of areas including administration, training, human resource management, planning and logistics; and 3) The 3G Force should be equipped with an asymmetric edge over its potential adversaries through the acquisition of

technologically advanced systems in areas of precision strike, advanced networks, sensing capabilities, and unmanned weaponry.<sup>203</sup>

More specifically, “integrated warfare” is made possible by the introduction and implementation of the concept “Integrated Knowledge-based Command and Control (IKC2). IKC2 is conceptualized as network-enabled, knowledge-based warfighting that is predicated on the OODA loop.

““Observing”, “Orienting”, Deciding” and “Acting” are essential components of any war-fighting cycle from the way information is assimilated, decisions made and action.”<sup>204</sup> Integrated warfare will give the SAF an upper hand in battlespace/situational awareness and battlespace management even when facing a stronger foe.<sup>205</sup> Overall, the latest thrust at RMA in cultural change alongside organizational innovation signifies SAF’s departure from the deterrence-based “poisonous shrimp” or “porcupine” posture to a more forward and expeditionary approach to contingencies with a calibrated and adaptive 3G Force that is more like a “nimble turn-knob.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> “The Third Generation SAF,” MINDEF, Singapore, accessed February 26, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef\\_websites/topics/3g/home.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/3g/home.html).

<sup>204</sup> Jacqueline Lee et al., “Realizing Integrated Knowledge-based Command and Control: Transforming the SAF,” *Pointer Monograph* 2 (2003): 13.

<sup>205</sup> Edward Chen et al., “Integrated Knowledge-based Command and Control for the One SAF: Transforming the SAF: Building the 3<sup>rd</sup> Spiral, 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation SAF,” *Pointer Monograph* 5 (2010): 1-78.

<sup>206</sup> Irvin Lim, “Credible Deterrence: Reviewing Discourse & Reframing the SAF to deal with Full Spectrum Threat Complex,” *Pointer* 31, no. 3 (2005), accessed January 24, 2011, <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/pointer/journals/2005/v31n3/features/feature2.html.print.html?Status=1>.

## ECON

The next institutional category *ECON* contains words of an economic, commercial, industrial, or business orientation, including roles, collectivities, acts, abstract ideas, symbols, references to money, and names of common commodities in business. Words such as credit, investment, poverty, and tax are examples of this group. Although GI identifies 5,308 words related to *ECON*, it should be noted that there are 510 base vocabularies in this particular category. In other words, the weight of this constituent element may appear greater than what it should really be. Nonetheless, relational content analysis uncovers a nexus of interplay between words surrounding the most frequently referred term in this category, “economy,” with a total of 177 times (see figure 3.8 below).

The Asian Financial crisis and the late global recession have vividly demonstrated that as an open economy with a small domestic market, Singapore is highly vulnerable to regional and global developments. While the 1997 regional crisis negatively affected Singapore in the currency, banking, and corporate sectors, the 2008 global recession hit the country doubly in the forms of reduced demand for electronics exports and a diminished supply of foreign direct investment.<sup>207</sup> As globalization hastens the pace of interdependence, the government is conscious about the fact that the city-state’s security and economic

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<sup>207</sup> Chia Siow Yue, “The Asian Financial Crisis: Singapore’s Experience and Response,” in *Southeast Asia’s Economic Crisis: Origins, Lessons, and the Way Forward*, eds. Heinz Wolfgang Arndt and Hal Hill (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 1999), 55; Shih Jang-Sup and Daniel Soh, “Impact of a Global Recession on a Small Open Economy,” *SERI Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 2009): 31-40.

well-being “will become even more susceptible to any instability in our external environment when we become more integrated with the global economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”<sup>208</sup>

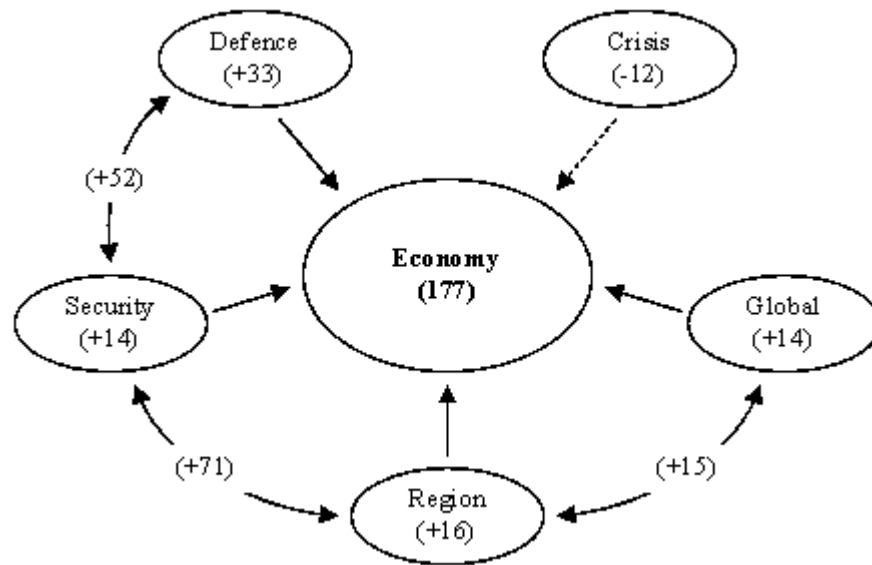


Figure 3.8: Collocation of “Economy”

In response to ongoing and more importantly, future economic adversities, the government has incorporated macro and micro directives to fortify the island’s economic security in the name of Economic Defence, one of the five pillars of Singapore’s Total Defence (TD).<sup>209</sup> Economic Defence places weight on the intelligent and efficient use of scarce resources such as land, manpower, natural

<sup>208</sup> ARF Annual Security Outlook 2004, 65.

<sup>209</sup> See Total Defence home page for information, related activities, and further reference. [www.totaldefence.org.sg](http://www.totaldefence.org.sg).



resources, capital investment, and technological skills. The ultimate goal of Economic Defence is to first ensure the economy can withstand prolonged external shocks, and second, ensures that the competing demands of the military and the economy can be accommodated in time of war. Operationally, a symbiotic relationship has been developed between the public and private sectors. While the government invests in the “fundamentals” such as education, research capabilities, and the infrastructure and connectivity of a global city, the private sector is to leverage public investment to better bring about a “productivity-driven” growth.<sup>210</sup> Economic Defence thus shares with other pillars of TD the mentality of staying relevant, competitive, and vigilant through internal upgrade, innovation, and development to lessen external dependence of any sort. Yet, what has not been mentioned is how Singapore can find the balance between this realist self-reliance frame of mind with the cooperation, accommodation, and concession in international trading regimes that are necessary for a trading state to thrive.<sup>211</sup>

## LEGAL

The last non-ideational institutional category, *LEGAL*, refers to word relating to legal, judicial, or police matters. Words such as amnesty, enforcement, sanction, and treatise falls within this group. Although GI identifies 359 words with LEGAL character, no meaningful connection between words can be

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<sup>210</sup> “Report of the Economic Strategies Committee,” Ministry of Finance, Singapore, Jan, 30, 2010.

<sup>211</sup> Narayanan Ganesan, *Realism and Interdependence in Singapore’s Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.

discerned. This lack of meaningful relationship is an unfortunate, but understandable, product of the ASEAN Way. The group of norms governing interactions among ASEAN member states includes mostly prominently, minimum formality, consultative and consensus-based decision making, non-interference, and non-use of force to resolve interstate conflict in the region. Accordingly, explicit legally binding provisions are missing from most agreements made through ARF or ASEAN. By preferences of the member states, ARF and ASEAN affairs are generally managed on a consultative basis through the personal connections in Track I and Track II venues. The rigid application of the non-interference principle makes voluntary compliance the basis of any regional agreement. It also effectively precludes punitive measures from being attached. Even when the ARF has made significant strides in maritime security cooperation, the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism (ACCT) signed at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines, in 2007, remains the only “region-wide, legally binding anti-terrorism pact with mandatory compliance to all relevant UN Conventions and Protocols regarding Counter-Terrorism.

Although Singapore has been active in supporting confidence building measures (CBMs) through Track I and Track II workshops and dialogues, the city-state’s commitment towards greater legalism within ASEAN is at best ambiguous. Although legalization of relationships may enhance predictability as “rules unambiguously define the conduct they require, authorize, or proscribe,” it nonetheless entails greater obligation with the state’s behavior subject to

scrutiny.<sup>212</sup> The need for cooperative security even in functional realms such as Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HARD) necessarily collides with the principles of non-interference and minimum formality. Yet, the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter is somewhat promising as it has become a legally binding agreement among the 10 ASEAN Member States. It will soon be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations, pursuant to Article 102, Paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>213</sup> Singapore was the first ASEAN country to ratify the Charter following its signing at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in November 2007.<sup>214</sup>

## Conclusion

In Singapore's case, conceptual content analyses uncover a strategic culture leaning toward the Hobbesian end with a higher predisposition to conflict. On the whole, non-ideational factors (POLIT, MILIT, ECON, and LEGAL) weigh more heavily than ideational ones (DOCTRINE, RELIG, EXPRSV, ACADEM) in constituting Singapore's strategic culture. In particular, political and military concerns trump others to be the most significant factors driving Singapore's security and defence policies.

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<sup>212</sup> Kenneth W. Abbott et al., "The Concept of Legalization," *International Organization* 54, no. 3 (2000): 401.

<sup>213</sup> "ASEAN Charter," ASEAN, accessed January 28, 2011, <http://www.aseansec.org/21861.htm>.

<sup>214</sup> "Press Statement: Singapore's Ratification of the ASEAN Charter," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, Jan. 7, 2008.

Relational content analyses identify two prominent situational considerations undergirding the making of Singapore's security and defence policies: a lack of strategic depth and reaction time, and smallness in resources (money, manpower, and material). In addition, concerns over the negative spillover effect of security issues originating in the neighborhood convince Singapore to maintain sophisticated armed forces owing to "regionally-based defence need." The adoption of the "integrated warfare" doctrine and the latest information-led RMA signifies the maturation of 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Singapore Armed Forces with forward and expeditionary defence capabilities.

Moreover, a focus on self-reliance with minimum dependence on external partners reflects the realist perception of a Hobbeisan world where zero-sum conflict is inevitable. Yet, cooperation and accommodation are not excluded either. The security and defence related documents analyzed in this chapter show that Singapore is quite willing to carry out "functional" cooperative security such as those in humanitarian aid and disaster relief. The signing of the Standard Operating Procedures governing both the Malacca Strait Patrol and the Eye in the Sky Maritime Air Patrol also indicates that Singapore embraces "functional" cooperative security as a new platform for regional interaction.

## Chapter 4

### THAILAND'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

#### Thailand in Southeast Asia

Geographically, Thailand is not a small country. It is in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, covering a land base of 513,115 sq km as well as a maritime economic zone of 212,220 sq km<sup>215</sup>. It borders the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and the Union of Myanmar (formerly Burma) to the north, Laos and the Kingdom of Cambodia to the east, Malaysia to the south, and Myanmar again to the west. In population, Thailand ranks 20th in the world with approximately 67 million people living in Thai territory. Since the establishment of a unified Thai Kingdom (commonly known as Siam) in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, Thailand has achieved racial and religious harmony relative to its neighbors through compulsory education and state sanctioned propaganda. Strong assimilation policies based on the three pillars of nationalism (Nation, Monarchy, and Religion) and official promotion of everything "Thai-ness" have only recently given way to the idea of respect for local diversity<sup>216</sup>. In addition, unlike its neighbors, adept diplomatic maneuver has kept Thailand from becoming a colony in the midst of western imperialism.

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<sup>215</sup> Office of Prime Minister, "Thailand at A Glance," *Thailand in 2000's* (Bangkok: Government of Thailand, 2000), 8. Thailand's maritime economic zone covers 72,200 sq. km in the Andaman Sea and 140,000 sq. km in the Gulf of Thailand, totaling 212,200 sq. km. 25,000 sq. km of which are claimed by Thailand as well as neighboring countries.

<sup>216</sup> Michael Kelly Connors. "Goodbye to the Security State: Thailand and Ideological Change," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 33, no. 3 (2003): 444.

Why then, does Thailand often perceive itself as a small state? Throughout its modern history, Thailand has never ascended to the status of political powerhouse or economic center of the region. Modern Thai political history has been characterized by a weak developmental state that is vulnerable to internal and external shocks. Internally, Thailand suffers from a myriad of social problems that are directly related to under- and unequal development. As of 2006, about 9.6% of the population falls under the World Bank designated poverty line of US\$1.25 per day.<sup>217</sup> The pace of urbanization has not been impressive either. Over 60% of Thailand's population still lives in rural areas in 2009.<sup>218</sup> Other than poverty, infectious diseases prove to be another major threat to Thai citizens. Political instability and the frequent alternation of power by military coups further weaken the state's capacity in handling developmental issues. As Thailand is still recovering from the debilitating effects of the 1997 Asian Financial crisis, the recent global recession is taking another toll on its export oriented economy.

Externally, Thailand's porous border control has made the country the origin, transit as well as destination for human trafficking, drug smuggling (such as methamphetamine and ketamine), and illegal small arms trade. In addition, escalating communal and sectarian violence continues to claim lives in the Muslim-dominated Deep South with a loss of 3,000 lives and counting since

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<sup>217</sup> "Core Economic Indicators 2008," National Statistical Office and Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Government of Thailand, accessed January 24, 2011, <http://web.nso.go.th/index.htm>.

<sup>218</sup> "Indicator: Rural Population." The World Bank, accessed February 24, 2011, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL>.

2004.<sup>219</sup> Frequent Thai accusations of militants using Malaysian territory to plan and train for attacks often worsen the already precarious Thai-Malaysian relations.<sup>220</sup> At the eastern front, the Thai insistence on solving the Preah Vihear Temple dispute bilaterally without seeking any mediation by ASEAN or other regional bodies necessarily clashes with Cambodia's intent to internationalize the conflict.<sup>221</sup>

Evidently, the Thai government has only limited success in unilaterally tackling any of the above mentioned problems. State capacity building, military or otherwise, depends greatly on external aid such as the Japanese block grants, US military assistance in counter-terrorism operations, and conflict resolution through interested third parties. Yet, Thailand has traditionally based its strategic policies (economic, national security, and defence) on the principles of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Bilateral ties with selected countries are preferred to multilateral ones that necessarily entail more strings attached. Especially in the last two decades, a visible shift has taken place in the policy making arena. Acknowledging Thailand's past as more accommodating, if not compliant, former president Chatchai argued in 1999 that the time is ripe for Thailand to take a more independent orientation:

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<sup>219</sup> International Crisis Group, "Thailand: Political Turmoil and the Southern Insurgency," *Asia Briefing* 80 (Bangkok/Brussels: ICG, August, 28, 2008).

<sup>220</sup> Ian Storey. "Malaysia's Role in Thailand's Southern Insurgency" *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 5 (March 2007), accessed January 21, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=1043](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1043).

<sup>221</sup> "Thailand Insists on Not Being the Party Starting Cross Fire with Cambodia," *Xinhua News Agency*, February 7, 2011.

“Even though Thailand is a small country which conducts policy that bends with the wind sometimes...changes in the world have opened the opportunity for us to change...I well realise that we can not set the direction of the wind, but in the present era we are able to stipulate our desired end objectives and use the wind to our advantage in walking towards those ends.”<sup>222</sup>

Given an already harsh security environment, both internal and external, why does Thailand, a self-perceived small country with developmental lags and weak state capacity, insist on solving its national security problems through bilateral means? The latest Thai-Cambodia exchange best illustrates this puzzle, especially when Thailand is a founding nation of ASEAN and a supporter for turning ASEAN into a vehicle for conflict resolution for the region. Identifying Thailand’s strategic culture characterized by the push and pull between cooperation and conflict may enlighten our understanding of Thailand’s threat perception and the policy instruments chosen to address existing and future security problems facing this small country.

### Approximating Thailand’s Strategic Culture

The concept of strategic culture suggests a cultural construct with operational dimensions.<sup>223</sup> Strategic decision makers’ world views on war and peace reside on a philosophical continuum with the Hobbesian zero-sum world

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<sup>222</sup> Chatchai Choonhaven, “Thai Kap Lok Nai Totsawat 1990s [Thailand and the World in the 1990s],” In Ruamngan Khian Lae Pathika Lem Thi 2 [Collected Writings and Speeches, volume 2], edited by Corrine Phuangkasem et al. (Bangkok: Mahawithayalai Thammasat, Khana Ratthasat, 1999), 4-5.

<sup>223</sup> Huiyun Feng, “China As A Rising Power,” *Chinese Strategic Culture and Foreign Policy Decision Making: Confucianism, Leadership and War* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 32-5.



and Kantian positive-sum community at the poles. At the Hobbesian end, political entities exist in a state of nature where the law of jungle reigns supreme. More specifically, war is merely the continuation of politics by other means.<sup>224</sup> Seen in this light, conflict is not only the means for states to survive but always at the same time an end itself. In this zero-sum world, peace is therefore “the continuation of struggle only by other means.”<sup>225</sup> The Kantian community at the other end portrays a society where cooperation is considered the best possible working mechanism for all interested participants to reap maximum benefit. The calculus for relative gains is replaced by the quest for absolute gains. In this positive-sum world, states may co-exist peacefully with each pursuing self-interest in a cooperative manner. Accordingly, peace is not only the end result but also a state of mind within which cooperation can be carried out. Yet, no state can long reside at either end of the continuum. Strategic culture is thus characterized by the push and pull between two opposing forces, the tendency for conflict at one end and the tendency for cooperation on the other. This push and pull necessarily affect the operational dimensions of strategic culture, namely, the perception and assessment of threat, the utility of force, the choice of ranked policy instruments, and last but not least, the expected outcomes.

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<sup>224</sup> Carl von Clausewitz. “What is War?” in *On War*, volume 1, trans. Col. J.J. Graham (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1908), 119.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 22.

### *Documents to be Content Analyzed*

The computer assisted content analysis software, General Inquirer, processed 19 defence and security related documents (see table 4.1 below) with a total of 78,361 words. These are official documents issued by the Thai government at the ministerial level. Speeches by individual political elites are excluded from data analysis because the speeches may reflect the personal views of the speech giver, not that of the state. Exceptions are made for documents 15 to 19, policy statements delivered to the national assembly by successive prime ministers. These statements represent the general direction of each administration on national security, not that of a particular prime minister.

The three white papers published by the Thai Ministry of Defence in 1992, 1994, and 2008 are considered traditional white papers. All three documents include sections on Thailand's defence and security policies, evaluation of the current and future security environment, the identification of major threats to national security, the state's relations with intra and extra regional powers, and information on the Royal Thai Armed Forces including order of battle, military expenditure, force modernization plans, equipment procurement plans, and the roles the Armed Forces play in national defence and development. The overall theme of the three defence white papers reflects a strong concern over uncertainties in the post-Cold War era, especially when small states in the region can no longer enjoy the umbrella protection made available by either superpower. The 2000 edition is a functional equivalent of a defence white paper published by

the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This particular chapter provides information on the force structure and objectives of the military as well as the missions the Armed Forces. Specifically, this chapter provides a detailed description of the UN peacekeeping missions in which the military has recently participated.

Table 4.1: Thailand Documents to be Content Analyzed

	Document Title	Word Count
1	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2001	5,480
2	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2002	2,174
3	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2003	2,620
4	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2004	3,386
5	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2005	3,409
6	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2007	4,379
7	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2008	3,264
8	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Thailand Chapter 2009	3,656
9	Defence White Paper, The Defence of Thailand 1994	15,133
10	Defence White Paper, The Defence of Thailand 1996	13,811
11	Defence White Paper, Thailand in 2000's, Defence Chapter	3,331
12	Defence White Paper, The Defence of Thailand 2008	12,700
13	National Security Policy 1998-2001	1,324
14	National Security Policy 2003-2006	1,211
15	Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai Delivered to the National Assembly, Policy on National Security, November 20, 1997	265
16	Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont Delivered to the National Assembly, Policy on National Security, November 3, 2006	578
17	Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej Delivered to the National Assembly, Policy on National Security, February 18, 2008	888
18	Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat Delivered to the National Assembly, Policy on National Security, October 7, 2008	366
19	Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva Delivered to the National Assembly, Policy on National security, December 30, 2008	387
	Total	78,361

To date, Thailand has routinely submitted four sections in its annual security outlook to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): perception of the global

and regional security environments with the identification of major threats, Thailand's contribution to regional stability, the roles of various forums and conventions in regional security, and Thailand's defence and security policies. Broadly, Thailand is less concerned with threats to global security such as globalization. The bulk of Thailand's regional security outlook focuses more on problems emanating from border security: territorial disputes, illegal drug trade, human trafficking, small arms smuggling, infectious diseases, terrorism, and nuclearization by its neighbors. Thailand is also confronted with "everyday security challenges" both in Thailand and in the neighboring countries. These challenges, such as the government's domestic legitimacy and social unrest, are primarily domestic and may weaken state capacity in the long run. More importantly, "everyday security challenges" have the potential to spill over and affect countries nearby. In its earlier submissions, Thailand briefed the Forum on the domestic reforms the government had been undertaking. However, this particular section was dropped entirely after its 2003 submission. Non-traditional security issues such as energy security, environment degradation, and maritime security were only added to the discussion after 2004.

The third batch of the documents, *Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers*, consists of the inaugural speeches of successive Thai prime ministers. The statements address the National Assembly on the administration's directions and objectives in several policy areas, including but not limited to urgent policies to be implemented, national security policy, social policy, economic policy, and

policy on good governance. Though it is possible that the prime ministers may have a greater influence on the wording, scope, and extent of the content, these statements provide a consensus shared by the cabinet. Only the sections pertaining to national security and/or defence are content analyzed. Two editions of National Security Policy are also included in this category. Formulated by the National Security Council of Thailand, these documents are considered the master plans for national security. The Council is composed of several ministers who are in charge of coordinating the maintenance of national security.

*Predisposition to Conflict vs. Predisposition to Cooperate*

General Inquirer detects a total of 3,149 power-conflict related words and 1,097 power-cooperation words. To better illustrate, figure 4.1 (see below) shows the visual representation of the push and pull between a stronger inclination toward conflict vis-à-vis a weaker tendency to cooperate.

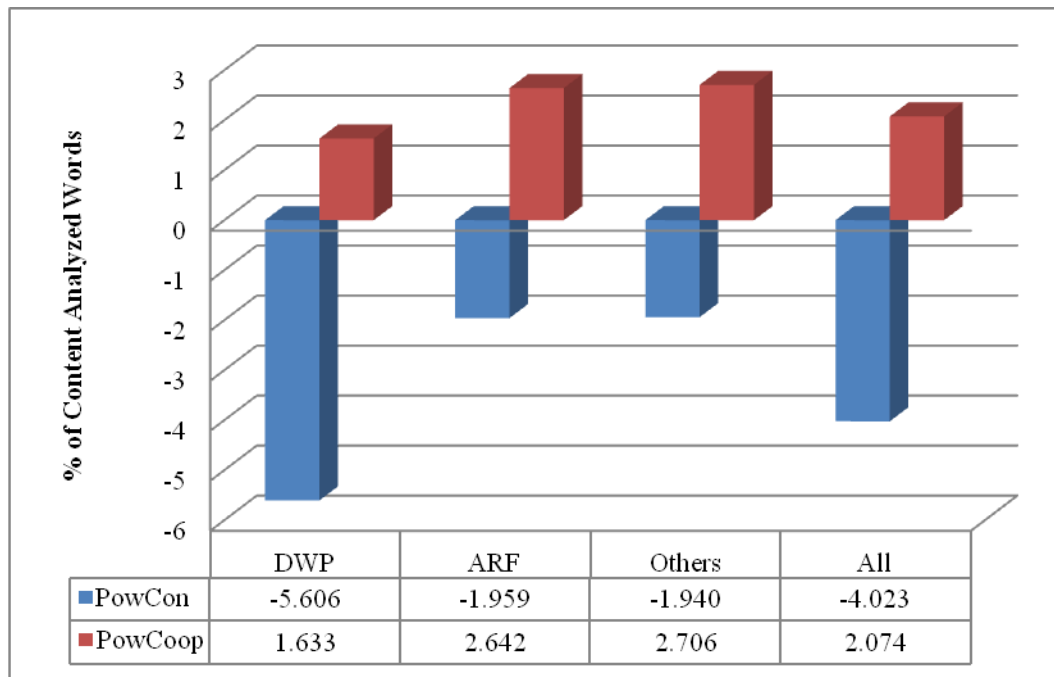


Figure 4.1: Approximating Thailand's Strategic Culture

In the defence white paper category, GI identifies 2,849 power-conflict related words and 725 power-cooperation related words. The tendency to conflict is more than three times stronger than the predisposition to cooperate. The identification of more power-conflict related words is expected as these documents by nature describe defence and military matters. Yet, the graph shows that the predisposition to cooperation, though weaker, is not non-existent. Even in defence white papers where “things martial” should predominate, Thailand still keeps cooperative policy instruments at its disposal. Given the severity of illegal activities at Thailand's border, Bangkok is especially keen on establishing cooperation with neighboring countries in the areas of extradition and mutual legal assistance in transnational criminal matters.

Notably in the ARF Annual Security Outlook category, the tendency to cooperate is only slightly higher than the predisposition to conflict. This finding is puzzling for two reasons. First, ARF was established to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political security issues of common interest and concern.<sup>226</sup> Other than the discussion of security threats to regional (and global) stability, member states customarily outline the contribution each can contribute to regional peace. Second, as a founding nation of ARF, Thailand should have been an avid promoter for transparency, confidence building, and preventive diplomacy. However, there are numerous occasions where Thailand displays minor disappointment in the non-institutionalized nature of ARF in handling security issues affecting the region. Thailand even calls for a new mandate by which the ASEAN Secretary-General can bring to the Forum's attention to any emerging or existing security issues that may adversely affect the peace and security of the region.<sup>227</sup>

In the last category, the tendency to cooperate is slightly higher than the predisposition to conflict. This finding is understandable because this particular batch of security policies is more internally oriented. Unlike the defence white papers, both the National Security Policy and the Policy Statement by the Council of Ministers are more concerned with threats to internal stability. Cooperation in

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<sup>226</sup> "Chairman's Statement: The First Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum," ASEAN Regional Forum, July 25, 1994, accessed March 3, 2011, <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/ChairmansStatementofthe1stMeetingoftheASE/tabid/201/Default.aspx>.

<sup>227</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2007*, 110.

this context means how the government may work together with the private sector and civil society organizations to tackle security threats that are domestic in nature. In terms of democratization, such cooperation signifies the growing strength of Thailand's private sector and more importantly, the gradual solidification of Thailand's civil society. However, the predisposition to conflict is not insignificant. The military is assigned the all-encompassing roles of upholding the unity of the nation as well as solving national development problems. By extension, the political influence of the military apparatus remains pervasive, if not unchallenged.

#### The Constituent Elements of Thailand's Strategic Culture

The constituent elements of Thailand's strategic culture and their relative weight are gauged first by subgrouping the 78,361 words into eight General Inquirer institutional categories, four of which are ideational and the rest material (see figure 4.2 below). The ideational cluster consists of religion, personal expression, doctrine, and academia. The non-ideational group includes politics, military, legal, and economy. Relational content analysis identifies key words that frequently appear in tandem in each category. The connections these key words have with each other are then visually represented and qualitatively investigated.



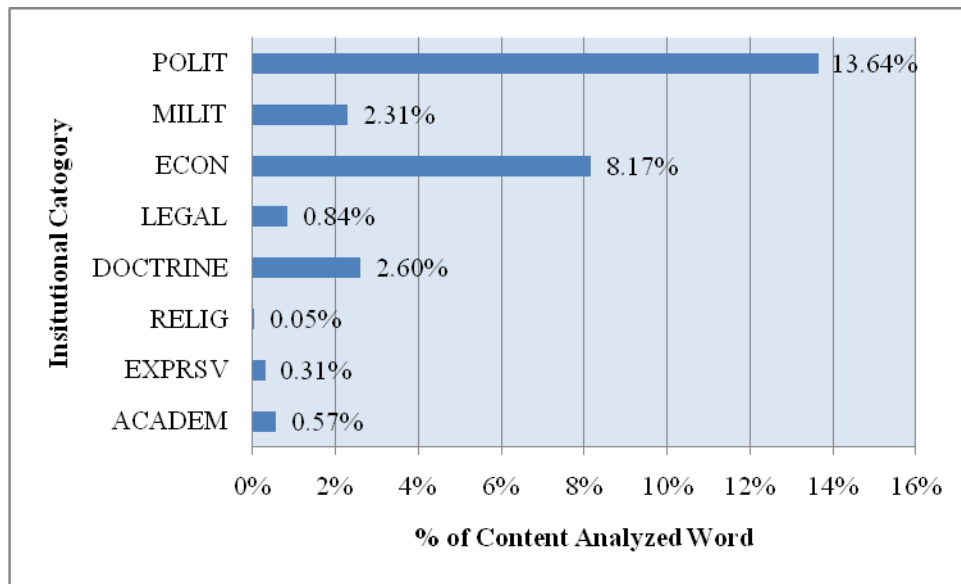


Figure 4.2: Thailand, Content by Institutional Category

### *Ideational Factors*

#### DOCTRINE

The institutional category, *Doctrine*, denotes any organized system of belief or knowledge, including those of applied knowledge, mystical beliefs, and arts as an academic subject. Words such as civilization, liberalism, medicine, and typography fall under this particular institutional category. GI identifies 2,035 words in this category. Through disambiguation and collocation, relational content analysis discovers a web of linkages surrounding the word “technology” (see figure 4.3 below).

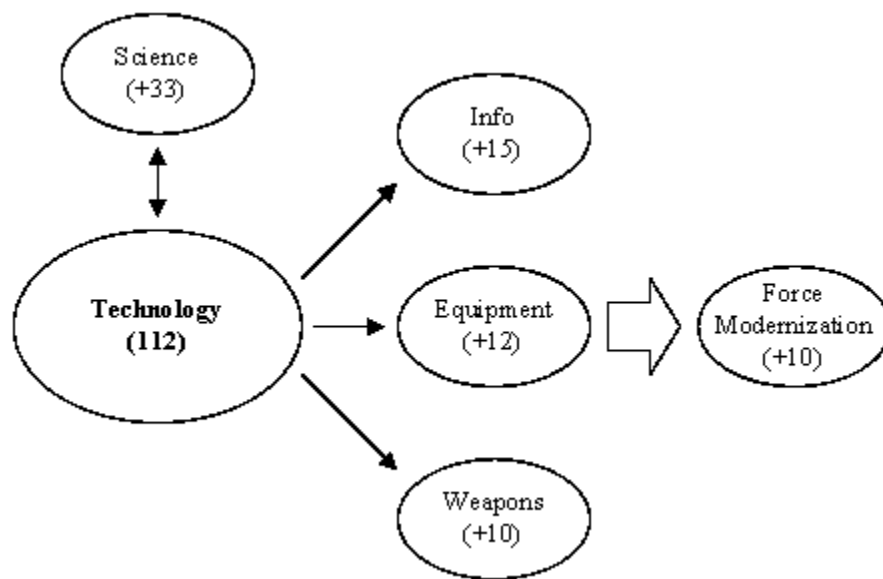


Figure 4.3: Collocation of “Technology”

The development of science and technology is one central aspect of the Royal Thai Armed Forces’ modernization plan. The changed security environment in the post Cold-War era has led the Thai Ministry of Defence to conduct a wholesale review of its military capability. The 1996 review concluded that “Thailand, like other small countries, had developed its Armed Forces with the assistance of the super powers. Consequently, it found itself with a surplus of manpower equipped with obsolete and out of date weapons.”<sup>228</sup> Accordingly, a significant portion of the defence budget was used “for the upkeep of personnel and only a limited amount left for the development and procurement of weapons and equipment.” To better shore up its defence needs, the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTARF) sees the acquisition of “modern weapons with high destructive

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<sup>228</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 58.

power” such as high-explosive munitions essential for the military to become a convincing deterrent to national security threats.<sup>229</sup> Other emphases have been given to the incorporation of information technology in surveillance, observation, and warning by acquiring high technology electronic equipment for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering.<sup>230</sup>

Another impetus for the tech-savvy force modernization plan is the regional trend in weapons procurement.<sup>231</sup> Thailand is cognizant that neighboring countries have been accumulating high technology offensive weapons, such as aircraft, ships and submarines. Many have also increased the mobility of their land forces and improved the capability of defensive weapons by acquiring surveillance equipment and anti-aircraft missiles. For example, the Chinese navy has embarked on a modernization plan to transform itself into a blue water navy with improved power projection capabilities. Malaysia, as a claimant to the Spratly Islands, has emphasized the procurement of modern high capability ships and aircraft. The Thai 2008 defence white paper specifically points to the imperative need for the armed forces to develop its forces and technology at a comparable level to regional countries.<sup>232</sup> Thailand began purchasing Chinese weapons in the 1980s for economic reasons, but in the past five years has sourced from various countries including Russia, Israel, and the United States. New

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<sup>229</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 23.

<sup>230</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 29.

<sup>231</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 9-13 and 36.

<sup>232</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*.

acquisition plans include the purchase of early warning aircraft such as the Su-30MKM combat jets, submarines, anti-submarine helicopters, air-to-air missiles, and improved surveillance and reconnaissance systems.<sup>233</sup> The series of procurement plans begs the question of whether Thailand is actively participating in a regional arms race.

## ACADEM

The institutional category, *ACADEM*, refers to words relating to academic, intellectual or educational matters, including the names of major fields of study. Terms such as grammar, letter, knowledge, and pupils fall under this group. GI identifies 442 words in this particular category. A cluster of words, education, research, and science, are found to be the major components of Thailand's plans for national power development (see figure 4.4 below). The Thai definition of national power is closely linked to its conceptualization of security. Five dimensions of security provide the basis of Thailand's overall wellbeing: political security, economic security, social and psychological security, military security, and science and technology security.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> "South-East Asia: Arms Sales Soar Amid Realignment," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*. March 26, 2010.

<sup>234</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 29.

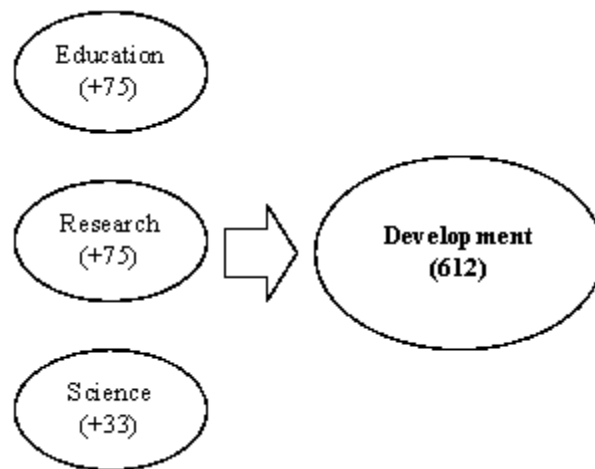


Figure 4.4: Collocation of “Development”

At the heart of the Thai government’s attempts to further secure each dimension of national power is a strong sense of developmental nationalism. In a nutshell, developmental nationalism stresses state-led construction of “political economies of development by promoting productivity and relative equality...”<sup>235</sup> Developmental projects aimed at visible forms of state modernization in the long run become synonymous with nation-building or state capacity building, all of which in turn confers legitimacy on political leaders.

To better confront threats and protect national interests, the National Security Policy 2003-2006 promotes the development and use of science and technology to enhance all aspects of national power. In particular, the development of manpower in science and technology is imperative to achieve this objective. A new education policy was implemented by the Somchai

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<sup>235</sup> Radhika Desai. 2008. *Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms*, Londong: Routledge, 2008), 399.

administration in 2008 to raise the overall quality of the education system, including the development of teachers, curricula, instructional media and information technology.<sup>236</sup> Interestingly, other than defending the country, restoring internal security, and maintaining law and order, the military is also responsible to “support the state in developing the nation... research and developing its defence industry and technology, space technology, information technology and communication...”<sup>237</sup> By participating in the developmental programs, the military is projecting itself as Thailand’s legitimate nation-builder. As the key national security institution, the military cannot be easily challenged or supplanted by other political actors.

## RELIG

The institutional category, *RELIG*, refers to words of religious, metaphysical, supernatural or relevant philosophical nature. Words such as communion, faith, oasis, and zen are examples of this category. Of the 78,361 words processed, GI filters out 40 words belonging to this category. Relational content analysis finds a cluster of words meaningfully connected to the word “religion” (see figure 4.5 below).

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<sup>236</sup> *Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers of Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat 2008*, 8

<sup>237</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, x.

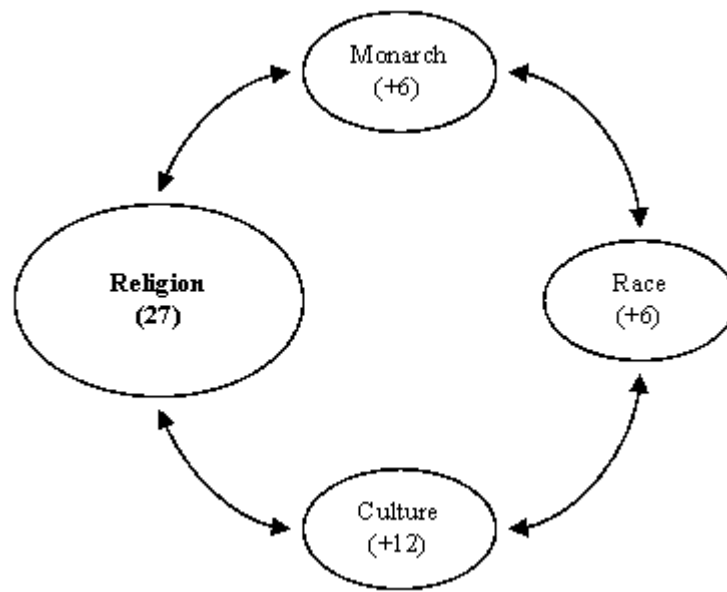


Figure 4.5: Collocation of “Religion”

Thailand has long enjoyed religious harmony with Buddhism, essentially unchallenged as the de facto state religion. Since Thai citizens are entitled to the constitutional right to freedom of faith, other religions are also present albeit with fewer followers: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (from the largest to the smallest groups by the number of followers). To promote the co-existence of all religions, the Buddhist King “is the royal patron of each faith, which allows the faithful of different religions to live together peacefully.”<sup>238</sup> Moreover, Thailand generally has not politicized religion. When addressing the public on the eve of her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday at Dusitdalai Pavilion, Queen Sirikit said that religion

<sup>238</sup> “Culture, Arts and Religions,” *Thailand in the 2000s*, 91.

should not be mixed with politics and there is no need to constitutionally declare Buddhism the state religion.<sup>239</sup>

In the 19 documents analyzed, Buddhism, along with the institution of Monarchy and the Thai culture are seen as the essence of “Thai-ness,” a philosophy to which all Thai people subscribe. The protection and maintenance of these three institutions are enshrined in Thailand’s national objectives.<sup>240</sup> The military places the greatest importance on the protection of the Monarchy and the Throne because this institution is at the center of the heart and minds of all Thai people.<sup>241</sup>

Yet, the concept of “Thai-ness” is fundamentally ethno-centric. While there is no agreed definition of what “Thai-ness” entails, Thongchai suggests that the discourse of modern national identity can be deconstructed both positively and negatively.<sup>242</sup> Positively, the notion of “Thai-ness” can be defined in several ways: the monarchy and Buddhism as the most important elements of the nation, treasuring national independence, and assimilation to civilized Thai culture. Negatively, the meaning of “Thai-ness” is delineated by carving out an outside and somewhat discriminating domain to represent an “un-Thai Other.”

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<sup>239</sup> “Thailand: Keep Religion Politics Free,” *The Bangkok Post*, Aug 12, 2007.

<sup>240</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 13.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>242</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Chiangmai: Silkwood Books, 1994), 3-5.



Observers point to the state endorsement of “Thai-ness” and the related assimilation policies as the root cause of Thailand’s Southern Insurgency.<sup>243</sup> The Malay-Muslim communities in the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat are conveniently targeted as the “others” in the Thai society. The insurgency is seen as the ultimate rejection of the state sanctioned assimilation policies as well as a way for the minorities to “un-Thai” themselves. Successive defence white papers have routinely identified the “southern border problem” as a serious threat to internal security. Swamped by other national security problems, however, Bangkok was unable to formulate a concerted strategy to deal with the conflict until the Thaksin administration came into being. Yet the policy choice was to confront the insurgents with open force rather than to seek negotiation and peaceful resolution. According to a RAND report, 24,000 security-force personnel were deployed to the south during Thaksin’s tenure, along with several specialized squads, 5,000 paramilitary rangers, 76,941 village defense volunteers, and a 1,400-strong teacher-protection battalion.<sup>244</sup>

Bearing in mind the limited success of Thaksin’s heavy handed policy, succeeding administrations have tried to shift their approach away from a confrontation-based strategy. The 2008 defence white paper contains a brief discussion of the new “people-oriented” policy guideline to the problem:

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<sup>243</sup> For example, see Saroja Dorairajoo, “Peaceful Thai, Violent Malay(-Muslim): A Case Study of the ‘Problematic’ Muslim Citizens of Southern Thailand,” *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 27, no. 2 (2009): 61-83.

<sup>244</sup> Peter Chalk, “The Malay-Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Understanding the Conflict’s Evolving Dynamic,” *RAND Counterinsurgency Paper* 5 (2008): 1-27.

“In order to solve this problem effectively and peacefully, the Government with the full support of the Armed Forces has applied His Majesty the King's concept of "Understanding, Reaching and Development" as the main policy guideline... In addition, the Armed Forces also have a big role in promoting local development in various fields to enhance the local community strength, for example education, economic, social, and sports etc.”<sup>245</sup>

## EXPRSV

The next institutional category, *EXPRSV*, groups together words related to arts, sports, and self-expression. Words such as composer, poetic, symbolism, and verses are subsumed under this category. Although GI identifies 244 words in this category, no meaningful connections between any pair of vocabularies can be construed after the dual process of collocation and disambiguation. This finding is expected as defence and security policies have little to do with arts, sports, and self-expression. While references to individualism are non-existent, the two editions of the National Security Policy point to the importance of a cohesive Thai society as the basis for social-psychological security. To accomplish this end, the government proposes social reform to enhance equality and fairness in society, bureaucratic reform to improve transparency and eliminate unfair use of power, and education reform to provide life-long learning opportunities for Thai citizens. Lastly, national unity is best achieved by commitment (to the nation), sacrifice, patience, and knowing others.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 35-36.

<sup>246</sup> *National Security Policy 1998-2001*.

### *Non-Ideational Factors*

#### POLIT

The first non-ideational category, *POLIT*, refers to words demonstrating a clear political character, including political roles, collectivities, acts, ideas, ideologies, and symbols. Words such as border, imperial, opposition, and reform are part of this group. GI identifies 10,677 words out of a total of 78,361 words processed. Relational content analysis identifies two constellations of vocabularies surrounding the base terms “security,” and “cooperation” respectively (see figures 4.6 and 4.7 below).

Figure 4.6 clearly depicts Thailand’s multifaceted threat perception, ranging from internal security to new forms of transnational threats. First, Thailand pays more attention to regional security than to its global counterpart. An updated list of threats to global security are identified in Thailand’s 2009 ARF Annual Security Outlook, including financial downturn, rising oil prices, potential pandemic, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and extremism.<sup>247</sup> Although Thailand may easily be affected by any of the threats to global security, these problems are beyond Thailand’s capability to address by itself. Instead, Bangkok chooses to focus more on the threats to regional security that may have an immediate effect on Thailand’s national security.

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<sup>247</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 117-118.

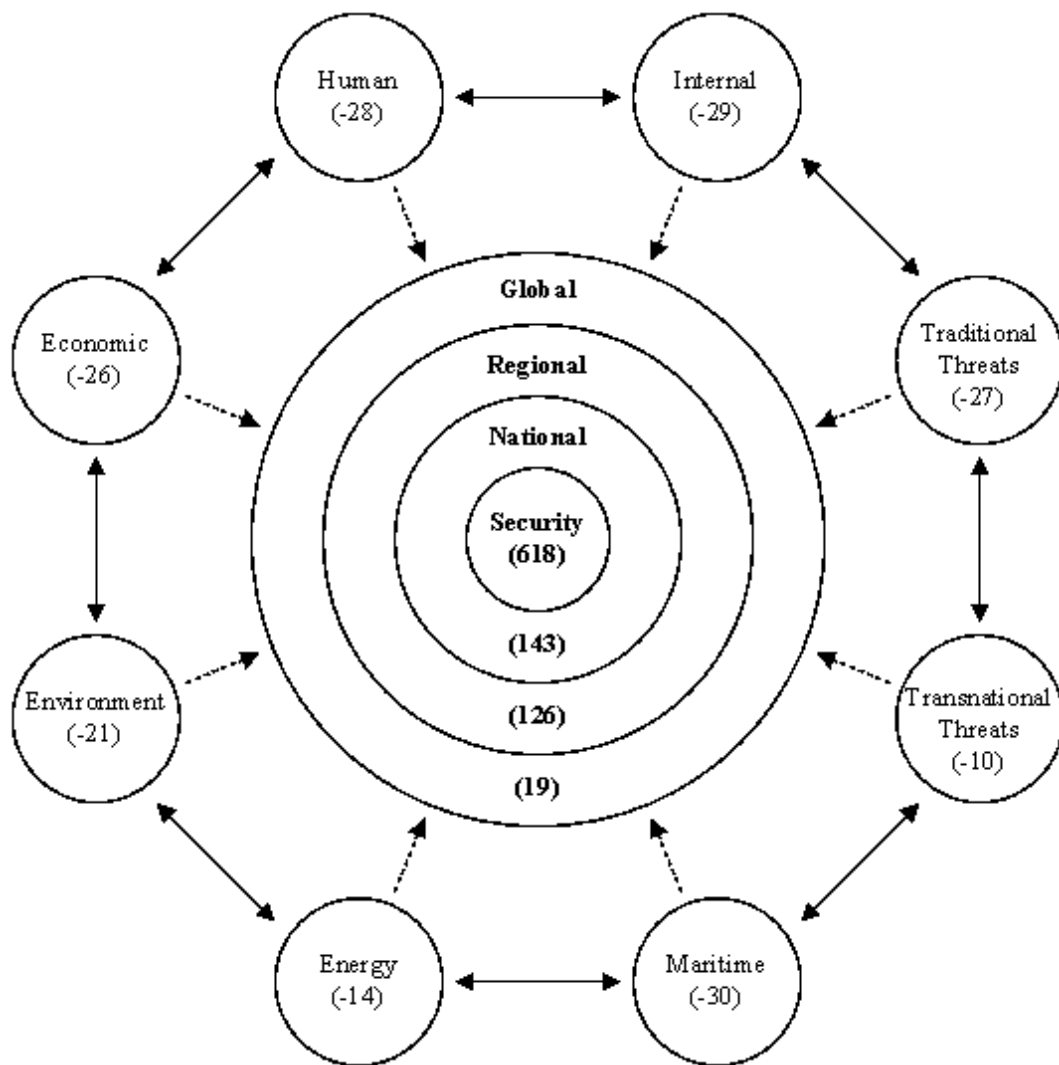


Figure 4.6: Collocation of “Security”

Starting with traditional threats, Thailand acknowledges the existence of territorial disputes in the region but has neglected to discuss the possibility of managing or solving the issues. Priority is placed on preventing and addressing non-traditional security challenges because the probability of traditional threats,

major power intervention for example, has significantly decreased.<sup>248</sup> Among the eight priority areas of transnational crimes and terrorism identified by ASEAN, Thailand attaches greater importance to addressing human trafficking, drug smuggling, and terrorism.<sup>249</sup>

Thailand's geographical location makes it not only the origin but also a convenient transit point and destination for human trafficking. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), it is estimated that between 200,000 and 450,000 people are trafficked annually within the Greater Mekong Sub Region.<sup>250</sup> Human trafficking poses imminent danger to Thailand's national security because the crime is not only cross border in nature but also occurs within the Thai territory. Bangkok has been tackling this problem from three levels.<sup>251</sup> Domestically, the Thai Parliament passed the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act in 2008. In addition to the conventional focus on trafficking of women and children, this Act includes males as possible victims of this crime. The Act also extends enforcement of and protection by the law to legal and illegal non-Thai victims as well as prescribes harsh punishment

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<sup>248</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, i.

<sup>249</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 89. The eight priority areas were identified during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) held in Kuala Lumpur on 16-17 May 2002. An Operationalization of the Work Programme to implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime established to address illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons (especially in women and children), sea-piracy, arms smuggling, money laundering, terrorism, international economic crime, and cyber crime.

<sup>250</sup> "Illicit Trafficking and Smuggling," United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, accessed February 23, 2011, <http://www.unodc.org/laopdr/en/Overview/Rule-of-law/Illicit-trafficking.html>.

<sup>251</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 90.

for offenders. The Thai government is also working with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help protect and rehabilitate victims. For examples, the Chiang Mai Model (CMM) proposed by the Bangkok chapter of the Asia Foundation is a comprehensive approach designed to protect rights of victims, provide them with the services they need, and secure the conviction of traffickers. Since the launch of the Chiang Mai Model in Thailand, more than 350 police, prosecutors, social workers, and other counter-trafficking practitioners have received training in the multi-disciplinary counter-trafficking approach.<sup>252</sup>

Regionally, Thailand has concluded the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers with Cambodia in 2003, Laos in 2005, and Myanmar in 2006. Thailand is also the initiator and participant of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT). Since this particular initiative is endorsed by concerned governments, the projects underway enjoy strong national ownership and a high level of political commitment with ministerial level approval and assistance.<sup>253</sup> Internationally, Thailand has partnered with the UN Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking in

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<sup>252</sup> “Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in Thailand,” The Asia Foundation, Bangkok, accessed March 3, 2011, <http://asiafoundation.org/publications/pdf/438>.

<sup>253</sup> “The COMMIT Sub-Regional Plan of Action (COMMIT SPA): Achievements in Combating Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, 2005-2007,” The UN Secretary-General’s Database on Violence Against Women, accessed on March 12, 2011, <http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/searchDetail.action?measureId=24276&baseHREF=country&baseHREFId=346>.

Persons and Slavery (UNGIFT) in distributing small grants to local facilities open to migrant women.<sup>254</sup>

Illicit drug trafficking is also of grave danger to Thailand's internal security. Dr. Boonruang, the deputy director-general of Thailand's Department of Medical Services openly acknowledged at a national conference on narcotics in Bangkok that "Thailand has the world's most severe problem with methamphetamine abuse."<sup>255</sup> According to official records, up to 100,000 new drug abuse cases have been reported to the Department. About 65% of new drug users are young adults, and more alarmingly, teenagers aged 15-19 years account for 32% of the total new cases of drug users.<sup>256</sup> Although countries of the "Golden Triangle" are committed to eliminate opium poppy cultivation, "the region has witnessed the surge in production, trafficking and abuses of synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine, methamphetamine hydrochloride (ICE) and ketamine."<sup>257</sup> The Thai government has been addressing this problem on three fronts.<sup>258</sup> Locally, sustainable alternative development projects were launched to help replace opium cultivation with cash crops and livestock. Other than the relevant civil agencies, the Royal Thai Armed Forces are also a principal actor in

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<sup>254</sup> "Small Grants Facility: Thailand," UN Global Initiative to Fight Trafficking in Persons and Slavery Hub, accessed on March 23, 2011, <http://www.ungift.org/>.

<sup>255</sup> "Researchers Puzzle Over High Rate of 'Yaba' Abuse," *The Bangkok Post*, July 15, 2010.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2007*, 105.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 105-6.

developmental projects in the border area. For example, the Programme for Border Self-defence Villages encompasses, among other things, the installation of communication systems, promotion of agriculture and social welfare, provision of medical services, religious studies, and cultural promotion.<sup>259</sup>

At the regional level, anti-narcotics collaboration with neighboring countries have been conducted bilaterally through Joint Border Committees. Thailand is also a participant in several regional initiatives such as the Pentalateral Cooperation on Drug Control (with China, India, Laos, and Myanmar) and ARF seminars on Narcotics Control. At the global level, Thailand continues to work with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Commission on Narcotics Drug to promote sustainability in alternative development in the border areas.<sup>260</sup>

Thailand's discussion of terrorism is often linked to the Southern Insurgency. In this context, the Thai internal counter-insurgency (CI) strategy focuses more on the "root causes" by promoting greater respect for local diversity (cultural, linguistic, and religious) and modernization.<sup>261</sup> Although the Abhisit government has announced, for the first time, plans to lift the emergency decree in several less affected districts, the military continues to oppose the move<sup>262</sup>. In addition, the government's plan to scale down the presence of some 30,000 troops

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<sup>259</sup> "Defence," *Thailand in the 2000s*, 223.

<sup>260</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 90.

<sup>261</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 91.

<sup>262</sup> "Southern Insurgency Remains Locked in Stalemate," *The Bangkok Post*, December 11, 2010.



remains unimplemented. Despite military resistance, the promulgation of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center will promote greater participation by local people, civilian-led operations independent of the military controlled Internal Security Operations Command, and report directly to the prime minister.<sup>263</sup>

With regard to international terrorism, Thailand has given greater attention to the improvement of legal frameworks. First, the 2007 Penal Code stipulates as criminal offences the making, forgery, distribution, and sale and possession of illegal travel documents. Second, the newly approved Computer Crime Act provides Thai officials with legal authority to search and seize electronic evidence, seek court orders to shut down web sites, and arrest cyber criminals. Third, the Anti-money Laundering Act of 1999 has been amended to empower the Anti- Money Laundering Office to be able to take swift actions in freezing funds and financial assets belonging to suspects of terrorism.<sup>264</sup> At the regional level, Thailand has signed treaties on Mutual Assistance and Criminal matters and Extradition treaties with many of the regional countries.<sup>265</sup> Moreover, The Extradition Act has been passed with full adherence to the UN Model. Thailand also prides itself as one of the first ASEAN Member States to ratify the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism.<sup>266</sup> At the international level, Thailand has thus

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2002*.

<sup>265</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 91

<sup>266</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual security Outlook 2009*, 121.

far ratified and acceded to nine of the thirteen UN Anti-Terrorism Conventions and Protocols.<sup>267</sup>

Closely related to terrorism is Thailand's increasing concern with maritime security, especially when "its scope has widened to include different kinds of non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, people smuggling, etc., not to mention the existing problems of sea piracy and armed robbery."<sup>268</sup> To better coordinate information sharing, the Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (THAI-MECC), established in 1998 under direct political purview of the National Security Council, connects the operations of five major authorities: the Royal Thai Navy, the marine police, the marine department, the customs department and the fisheries department. Thus far, the naval patrols have proven effective in deterring human trafficking and drug trafficking through sea routes.<sup>269</sup> In the region, mutual maritime interests have been protected through bilateral joint patrols with Malaysia, Vietnam, and India. Thailand has also recently joined the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) with Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia mainly through the Eye In the Sky (EIS) aerial patrol initiatives. Moreover, Thailand is one of the contracting parties to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia, the first government-to-government agreement designed to

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> "Thailand Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2007*, 106.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid, 107.

enhance regional maritime security. In addition to cooperating with regional actors, Thailand has partnered with the US in the Personal identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation Systems (PISCES), Container Security Initiative (SCI) as well with Australia in the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS) to better track movement of passengers and cargos both to and from Thailand.<sup>270</sup> With regard to port security, Thailand has voluntarily implemented the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code along with the installation of the Automatic Identification System on certain new ships to comply with the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Agreement. Yet, no matter which state or organization Thailand partners with, Bangkok reiterates that “cooperation in promoting maritime security should be based on the relevant principles of international law and have due regard to the interests of both littoral States and User States.”<sup>271</sup>

Lastly, although Thailand’s ARF submissions routinely discuss economic security, environmental security, and energy security, the discussions are short and without much substance. This finding is expected as Thailand is currently preoccupied with internal security issues and everyday security challenges. Environmental security and energy security are not as urgent as other areas of security. Minimal discussion on economic security is also understandable because ARF is not a forum for matters related to trade and economics.

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<sup>270</sup> Suriya Pornsuriya, “Thailand’s Perspective,” in *Maritime Counter-Terrorism: A Pan-Asian Perspective*, ed. Swati Parasha (Delhi, India: Dorling Kindersley Pvt. Ltd., 2008), 93.

<sup>271</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 91.

Other than “security,” relational content analysis also finds a cluster of words surrounding the base term, “cooperation,” which appears 402 times in the 19 documents processed (see figure 4.7 below). One enduring feature of Thailand’s defence and security policy is “enhancing security cooperation with neighboring states, and the regional and international community.”<sup>272</sup> Key areas of cooperation include counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, joint military training and exercises, developmental programs for regional community building, and mutual legal assistance to deal with transnational crimes. Although claiming itself as an avid supporter of multilateral forums, Thailand appears to prefer bilateral cooperation to multilateral whenever possible.

The most common forms of bilateral cooperation include the establishment of an ad hoc Joint Working Committee under the purview of a relevant ministry and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).<sup>273</sup> For example, Thailand has enhanced anti-narcotics collaboration with its neighbors through Joint Border Committees to better patrol the border areas against illegal drug trade. This model provides the template for the interested parties to discuss the issue at hand without jumping through bureaucratic hoops. The utility of this model is evidenced in the new arrangements of the Cambodia-Thai General Border Committee and Joint Border Committee on Demarcation for

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<sup>272</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, ix.

<sup>273</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2004*, 74.

Land Boundary (JBC) on April 7-8, 2011, in Bogor to negotiate recent border conflicts.<sup>274</sup>

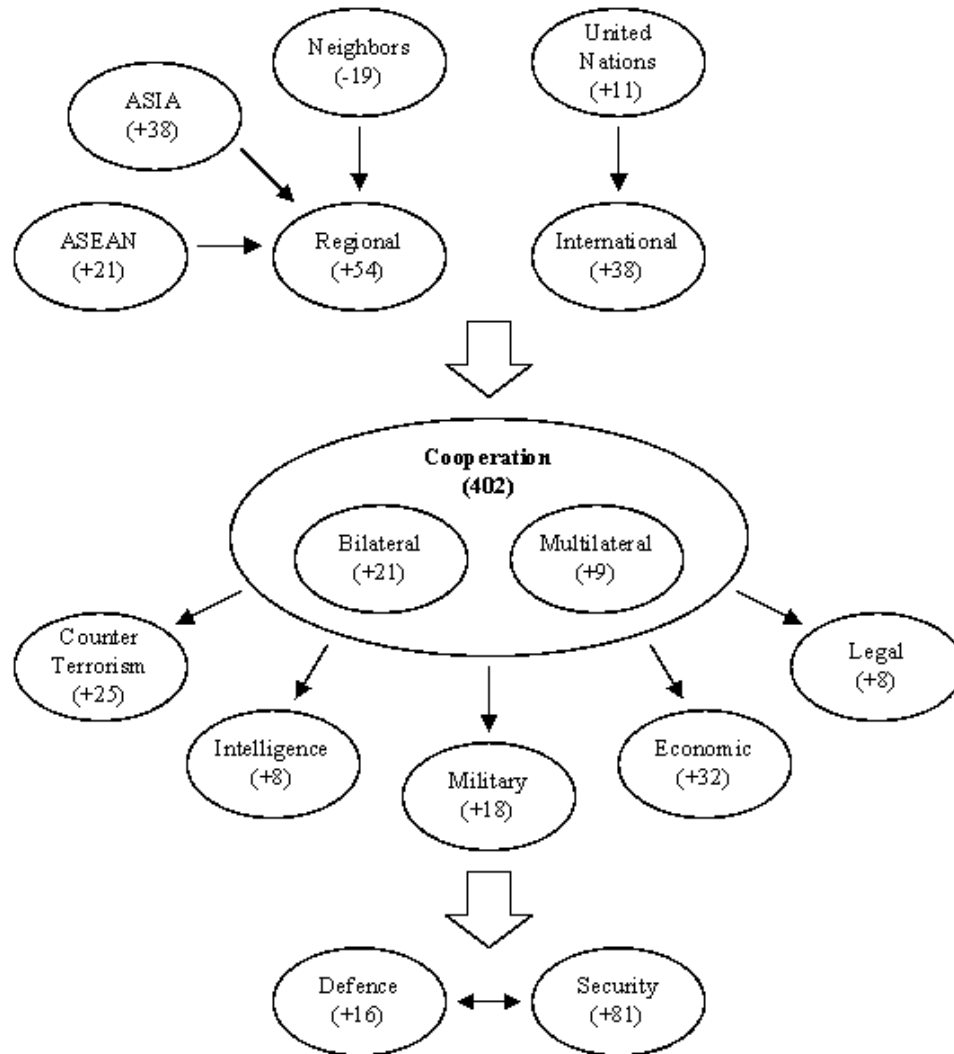


Figure 4.7: Collocation of “Cooperation”

<sup>274</sup> “Cambodian Officials Leave for Indonesia to Discuss Border Issue with Thailand,” *Xinhua News Agency*, April 6, 2011.

Regional security cooperation is often conducted through regional forums such as ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Forum, the Greater Mekong Sub-region Cooperation, East Asia Summit, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, to name just a few. The multitude of overlapping forums is unavoidable as great diversity (or lack of commonalities) exists within the Asia-Pacific region. Accordingly, “no single overarching security architecture is envisaged to oversee the entire region in the near future.”<sup>275</sup> Yet, many of the overlapping forums are necessarily redundant as similar issues such as terrorism and transnational crimes are discussed repeatedly. In fact, four types of security cooperation combine and at the same time compete with each other: multilateral defence cooperation between extra-regional powers and individual Southeast Asian states (Five Power Defence Arrangements for example), ASEAN-centered non-binding multilateral efforts, US-led theatre security arrangements, and rising Chinese influence, if not domination, in East Asia security issues.<sup>276</sup> Although each forum makes its own unique contribution to regional security, Thailand openly suggests the consolidation of security cooperation through “a more coordinated and sophisticated network of dialogue, intelligence, capacity building, and other cooperation activities.”<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2005*, 110.

<sup>276</sup> Charles A. Thayer, *Southeast Asia: Patterns of Security Cooperation* (Canberra: The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2010), 2.

<sup>277</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 93.

Interesting, the National Security Policy 2003-2006 stipulates that Thailand needs to maintain relationships with all major power but at the same time should avoid commitments that could undermine its national interests. Moreover, collaboration for mutual benefit must be carried out on an equal basis.<sup>278</sup> Together, this signifies Thailand's reluctance to be the junior partner in any of the bilateral or multilateral arrangements. This reflects the shift to a more independent posture in foreign policy decision making.

Two areas of international cooperation in which Thailand has been particularly active are the peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance under the auspices of United Nations. The government sees its participation in UN mandated activities as a way to gain Thailand honor and prestige. It is also a way to show that Thailand is a responsible member of the international community. In fact, Thailand has just sent a number of troops, known as the Thai-Darfur Task Force 980, to join the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur at the end of 2010.<sup>279</sup> In addition, Thailand insists that all forms of cooperation should be conducted under the framework of the United Nations. For example, "counter-terrorism cooperation within the ARF should complement the global efforts led by the UN. In this regard, the ARF might

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<sup>278</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 81.

<sup>279</sup> "Thailand's Participation in United Nations Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Missions," The Government Public Relation Department, Government of Thailand, December 7, 2010, accessed March 12, 2011. [http://thailand.prd.go.th/view\\_inside.php?id=5399](http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_inside.php?id=5399).

consider how it could support its participants to fully implement relevant UN resolutions.”<sup>280</sup>

## MILIT

Closely related to *POLIT* is the institutional category of *MILIT*, a group of words relating to military matters. Words such as coup, fort, intervention, and troop fall under this category. Of the 19 documents processed, GI identifies 1,815 words reflecting military matters. Since there are only 88 base words in this category, the number of *MILIT* words discovered by GI may undervalue the true weight of this constituent element in Thailand’s strategic culture.

Relational content analysis reveals a cluster of words centering on the Royal Thai Armed Forces (see figure 4.8 below). The Armed Forces is the key national security institution in Thailand. It comprises the Royal Thai Army (RTA), Royal Thai Navy (RTN) and Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). According to the latest *Military Balance*, the entire Armed Forces has a strength of approximately 305,590 officers and enlisted personnel on active duty, including 190,000 in the army, 46,000 in the air force, and 69,860 in the navy.<sup>281</sup> The actual number of the reserve force is unknown but estimated to be at least 160,000 persons.

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<sup>280</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2002*.

<sup>281</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2010* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2010).



In order to face a multitude of security challenges, the Armed Forces is to transform itself from a conventional military force into a “multipurpose” one<sup>282</sup>. In effect, the military is tasked with several roles and responsibilities other than defence.<sup>283</sup> First, the RTARF is responsible for protecting national sovereignty, national territory, the Monarchy, democracy under the Monarchy, and the national interest in the context of national security. Second, the RTARF supports the state in developing the nation, maintaining internal security, restoring law and order, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, researching and developing its defence industry and technology, space technology, information technology and communication, and military operations other than war (MOOTW). Third, the RTARF has a role in maintaining regional and international peace and stability under the United Nations framework.

Due to the diminishing likelihood of conventional armed conflicts in the region, the role of the Thai armed forces has been re-adjusted to focus on tasks other than defence and the preparation for an actual armed conflict. Today, the armed forces allocates most of its personnel in assisting in the implementation of developmental projects, preservation of the environment and natural resources, and other civic action programs.<sup>284</sup> Since mid-2008, the militarized Thai-Cambodian confrontation over the temple of Preah Vihear, however, has however

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<sup>282</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 53

<sup>283</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, ix-x.

<sup>284</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 124.

reoriented the military's focus back to border defence (see chapter 7 for discussion). Overall, these roles and responsibilities, as prescribed by the Constitution, elevate the status of the Armed Forces from the military arm of national defence to a principal political actor. The linkage between the institution of the Monarchy, state religion and the military further accentuate the importance of the Armed Forces.

Like many of the armed forces in the region, the Thai military is also undergoing force modernization. In particular, the military must develop its force capability and technology at a level comparable to regional countries.<sup>285</sup> Yet, the self perceived need not to lag behind others is itself an indication of a high level of intramural suspicions.<sup>286</sup> Key areas of the modernization plans include forces restructuring, military education and personnel training, weapons upgrades, and research and development (R&D) capability. The overall modernization theme is “change from quantity to quality.”<sup>287</sup> To do so, the Armed Forces will be reduced in size to the ratio of 1 active personnel to 1 reservist.<sup>288</sup> To offset the reduction in size, the 2006-2010 Defence Forces Modernization Plan sets out a phased procurement plan for modern hardware and equipment. Several priority items have been identified: upgrades and purchases of new fighter jets, command and

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<sup>285</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 58.

<sup>286</sup> Andrew Tan, “Unspoken Fears: Inter-State Tensions Within ASEAN,” in *Seeking Alternative Perspectives of Southeast Asia*, eds. Andrew Tan, Michael L R Smith, and Dato’ Khoo Kay Kim (Ipoh, Malaysia: Perk Academy, 2004a), 154.

<sup>287</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 42.

<sup>288</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1996*, 56.

control (C4I) systems, UAVs, multi-role helicopters, an air defence early warning system, off-shore patrol vessels, training simulators, and search and rescue aircraft.<sup>289</sup> The new procurement plan seems to favor the Air Force because surveillance and reconnaissance cannot be accomplished without an agile air defence system. Moreover, flexible, long range, and high precision air power is necessary for a quick and decisive victory.<sup>290</sup> Lastly, the reduction in size mandates integration and joint operations among the three services. In effect, joint operations through efficient networking among command and control, sensors and engagement are considered force multipliers in the military's modernization plan.<sup>291</sup>

In addition to foreign sources, the development of an indigenous defence industry with enhanced research and development capabilities is seen as a way for the military to achieve self sufficiency and self-reliance. The defense industry in Thailand today is relatively small and supports mainly the army. There are currently 48 defense-related industries under the Ministry of Defense. Of the 48, 21 are operated by the Royal Thai Army, seven by the Royal Thai Navy, 12 by the Royal Thai Air Force, 1 by the Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters, and

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<sup>289</sup> "Thai military puts up spending defense" *Asia Times*, February 26, 2010.

<sup>290</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 44-45.

<sup>291</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 53.

seven by the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defense.<sup>292</sup> Overall, the industry is still in its nascent form and has not reached its desired potential.

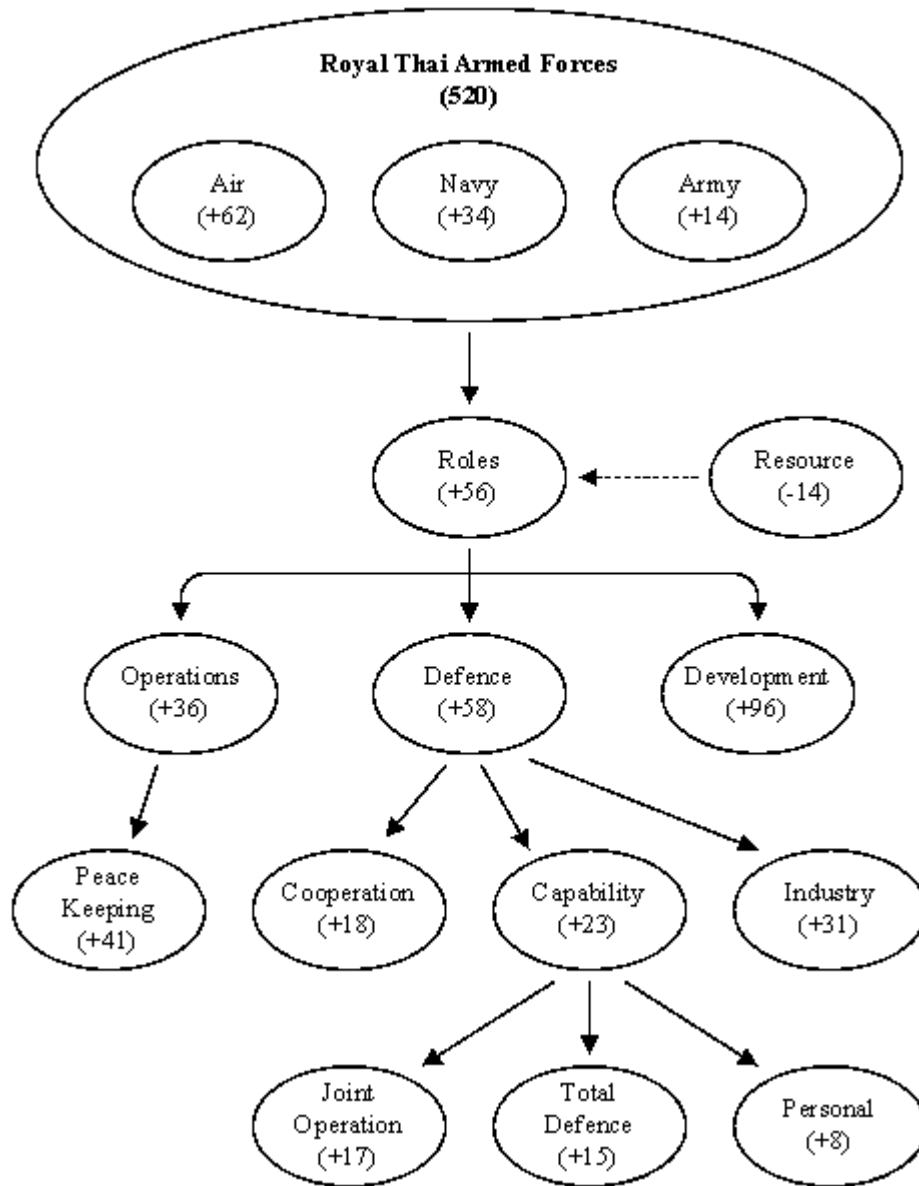


Figure 4.8: Collocation of “Royal Thai Armed Forces”

<sup>292</sup> “Defense Industry and the Creative Economy,” The Government Public Relations Office, Thailand, March 13, 2011.

Yet, like any other armed forces, the military must compete with other national development objectives for resources. Graph 4.3 shows that the Thai defence budget has been on the rise since 2001. The estimated defence budget for 2010 is roughly 5.1 billion USD, accounting for 8% of the total national expenditure or 1.7% of Thailand's GDP. Out of 5.1 billion USD, 22% is spent on acquisition of new equipment, 40% on support and logistics, 14% on repair and maintenance, 14% on upgrading equipment, and the remaining 10% on education and training.<sup>293</sup> The Ministry of Defence believes that Thailand's modest defence budget, compared to other countries, is "not large and not threatening."<sup>294</sup> The Ministry went further to suggest that for the armed forces to fulfill the roles and responsibilities assigned to it, the national budget allocated to defence should be increased to at least 2% of GDP, or roughly 6 billion USD. Nonetheless, observers claim that neither the Ministry of Defence nor the Armed Forces can engage in effective resource management.<sup>295</sup> In particular, each service may autonomously draw up its own separate budget, and has authority to manage that budget and personnel. The lack of centralized budget planning inevitably leads to overlapping duties and units, higher budgets for personnel, and inefficient use of resources. However, none of the defence related documents discussed this problem.

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<sup>293</sup> Asia Defence Journal, slides prepared for the Defence and Security Expo 2011, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, November 2-5, 2011.

<sup>294</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 63.

<sup>295</sup> Perapong Mankiat. *Seminar on the Role of Parliament in Defence Budgeting* (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Security Sector Governance in Southeast Asia (IPF-SSG-SEA), 2008.

The substantial increase in military budget in the last three years (see figure 4.9 below) may be attributed to the weak central government's need to cajole support from the military in the post-Thaksin era. In particular, the military's budget jumped 24% to US\$4.6 billion by July 2007 after the 2006 coup and the installation of a military government.<sup>296</sup> In November 2007, then defense minister Boonrawd Somtas further requested \$9.3 billion for new weapons over the next 10 years. Although the Abhisit government cut the defence budget for 2010 by US\$547 million in May 2010 due to shortfalls in revenue collection, the government endorsed most of the military's procurement plans.

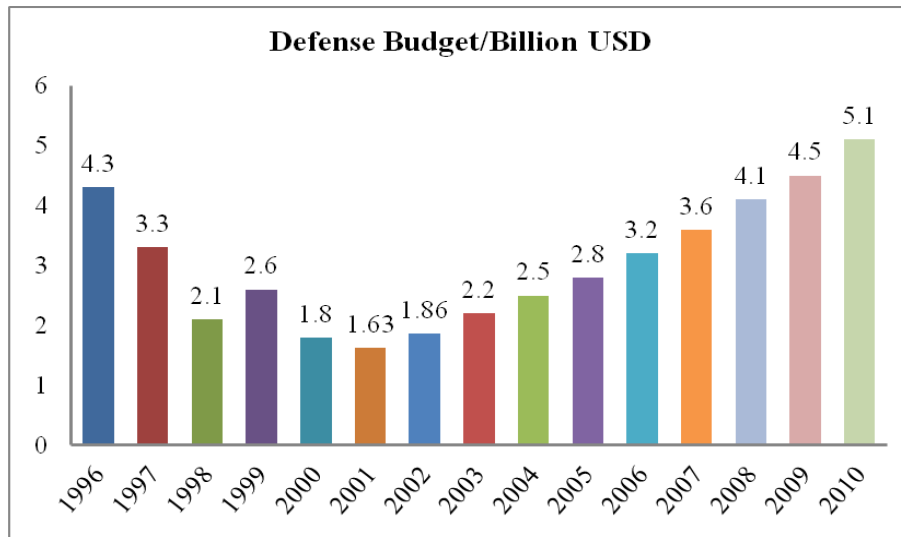


Figure 4.9: Thailand's Defense Budget 1996-2010  
(Source: Asian Defence Journal)

<sup>296</sup> "Thai Military Puts Up Spending Defense," *Asia Times*, February 26, 2010.

The ostensible purpose of the force modernization is to strengthen the armed forces' ability to better defend the nation. At the policy level, national defence is to be realized through a total defence strategy. This is a defence system aimed at "deterrence, protection and responding to enemy operations by the planned integration of all available forces, including main forces, local forces and citizens, with continuous political, economic, social-psychological and military support, to deal with conflicts at every level."<sup>297</sup> At the operational level, three distinct military strategic doctrines have been formulated to better meet national defence objectives: Security Cooperation, United Defence, and Active Defence. Security cooperation is to be carried out with major powers that have some bearing on regional security.<sup>298</sup> Interestingly, while Thailand has maintained a long strategic partnership with the US to help modernize its military and facilitate economic development, the RTARF is also building closer ties with China's People's Liberation Army through medium and high level exchanges, joint research, and possible military technology transfer. However, security cooperation is by no means alliance. There is no discussion on alliance making in any of the defence white papers. In Thailand's perspective, ASEAN is not a security pact and military cooperation is limited to joint exercises and logistics support cooperation outside of ASEAN.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 40.

<sup>298</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 70-71.

<sup>299</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 34.

United Defence is based on the popular acceptance of the military apparatus by all sectors of the society. It is thus important for the military to raise public awareness of the roles and responsibilities assigned to the armed forces. Again, the most important of which is the military's role in upholding the institution of the Monarchy and by extension, encouraging the population to support the King. Lastly, Active defence denotes operational readiness through joint operations, and the utilization of intelligence, early warning, and the surveillance system. The doctrine of Active Defence also entails the preparation for fighting a two-front war. In particular, the Ministry of Defence holds that the Armed Forces should be able to conduct combat operations in one area while at the same time maintain defensive position in another area.”<sup>300</sup> This doctrine can be applied to the scenario where the armed forces have to fight the insurgents on the southern border and a border confrontation with Cambodia to the east.

## ECON

The next institutional category *ECON* contains words of an economic, commercial, industrial, or business orientation. Words such as auditor, equity, refund, and welfare are examples of this group. GI identifies 6,396 words related to ECON. Relational content analysis uncovers a cluster of words surrounding the most frequently refereed term in this category, “economy,” with a total of 303 times (see figure 4.10). Other than being affected by the global financial

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<sup>300</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 77.



downturn, Thailand is cognizant that future competition between states for economic opportunities and resources will be a new basis of conflict. Economic disputes and threats will have a greater effect on national security because the traditional split along “political blocs” during the Cold War era is now shifting into “economic blocs.”<sup>301</sup> For Thailand, economic problems cannot be separated from political and social problems. In this regard, Bangkok’s top priorities are poverty alleviation and more equitable distribution of income through government initiated developmental programs.

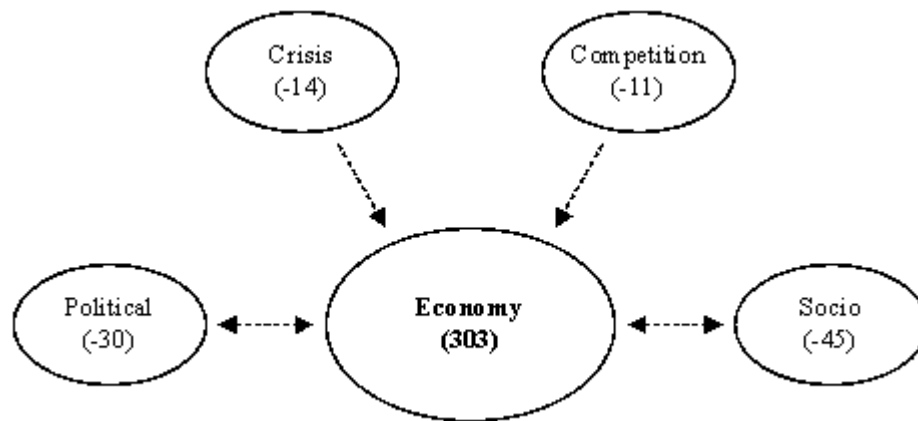


Figure 4.10: Collocation of “Economy”

## LEGAL

The last non-ideational institutional category, *LEGAL*, denotes words relating to legal, judicial, or police matters. Words such as divorce, negligence, probation and summons fall within this group. GI identifies 660 words with

<sup>301</sup> *Defence of Thailand 1994*, 1.

LEGAL character. Relational content analysis discerns a cluster of words surrounding “transnational crimes” (see figure 4.11 below). Other than amending domestic laws, Thailand attaches greater importance to improving legal compatibility between affected states to ensure that extradition and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters are available, timely, and effective.<sup>302</sup> To promote legal compatibility, Thailand hosted two workshops, in January and June 2005, on ‘International Legal Cooperation against Terrorism under the framework of the Legal Issues Working Group of the Bali Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism. Thus far, Thailand has concluded bilateral extradition treaties on Mutual Assistance and Criminal Matters with a total of 14 countries, including the US, UK, Canada, China, Belgium, Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, South Korea, Bangladesh, Fiji, and Australia.

Regionally, Thailand is also a party to the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. This particular Treaty is aimed at improving the effectiveness of the law enforcement authorities of the Parties to the MLA Treaty in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of offences through cooperation and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. However, Thailand’s enthusiasm for more legal obligations in other issues areas such as environmental security and human rights is ambivalent.

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<sup>302</sup> “Thailand Chapter,” *ARR Annual Security Outlook 2005*, 97.

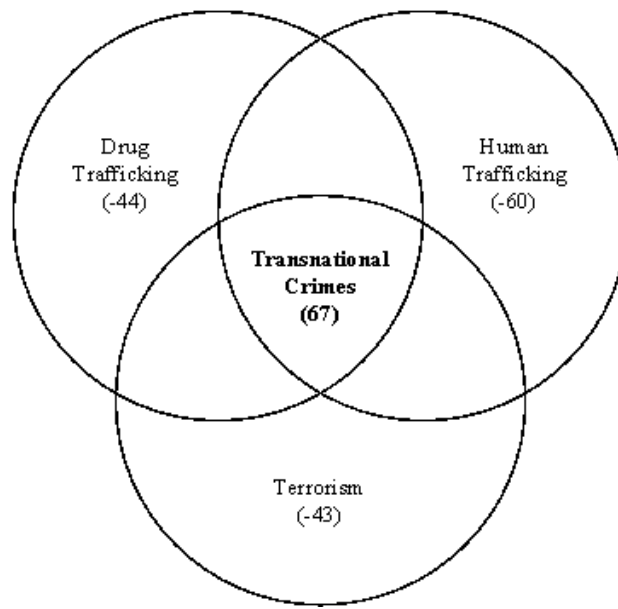


Figure 4.11: Collocation of “Transnational Crimes”

## Conclusion

In Thailand’s case, conceptual content analysis reveals a strategic culture leaning toward the Hobbesian end with a higher predisposition to conflict.

Although Thailand does not preclude cooperation as a valid policy instrument, Bangkok is quite selective on how and with whom cooperative security should be carried out. Overall, non-ideational factors weigh more heavily than ideational ones in constituting Thailand’s strategic culture.

Relational content analyses uncover three situational considerations underlining the making of Thailand’s defence and security policies: internally focused threat perception, developmental nationalism, and resilience of the military apparatus. First, Thailand’s threat perception is internally oriented. Security problems emanating from border security such as the Southern

Insurgency, drug smuggling, and human trafficking are high on Bangkok's agenda. Although many of the security issues are transnational in nature, Thailand is more focused on addressing related problems within its border. Thailand's approach in solving these security challenges through collaborative means, however, does not apply to the separatist movement in the south. This reflects one unchanging feature of international relations in Southeast Asia, as the late Michael Leifer once opined, that national sovereignty is still cherished jealously among the regional states.<sup>303</sup> The selective application of cooperative means also serves as a caveat to the constructivist optimism about the positive spillover effect of the dialogues and forums for the creation of any regional cooperative security architecture. Realists argue that "constructive agendas do not resonate with the elites of the region, who are welded to... classic realism, with its emphasis on the preservation of state sovereignty."<sup>304</sup>

The state developmentalist approach inevitably rationalizes the continuous military control of politics by elevating the military apparatus to the status of nation builder. Moreover, the self assigned roles of the military in protecting the institution of Monarchy, religion and culture further solidify the Armed Forces' influence in the political realm. The more recent defence and security documents also show some effect by the military to regain support from the population<sup>305</sup>.

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<sup>303</sup> Michael Leifer, *Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1972), 150-151.

<sup>304</sup> Tan, "Unspoken Fears," 151.

<sup>305</sup> *Defence of Thailand 2008*, 80.

The bottom line is civilian control as the military is only constitutionally responsible for restoring internal order. The Armed Forces also need to inform the public about its operations in a timely and complete manner. There will also be opportunities for the public to participate in the Armed Forces' activities such as formation of MoD Strategy, determining the MoD's military to civilian ratio, or joining the think tanks. Friendly gestures notwithstanding, given the entrenched nature of military control of internal affairs, it is difficult to imagine the Armed Forces withdrawing from the political scene. Thailand's defence and strategic policies, as well as its strategic culture, will continue find the imprint of the military.

## Chapter 5

### MALAYSIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE

#### Malaysia in Southeast Asia

Malaysia has always perceived itself as a small country both in absolute and relative terms. Malaysia encompasses two landmasses separated by part of the South China Sea. West Malaysia, more commonly known as Peninsular Malaysia, consists of 11 states and the federal territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. East Malaysia includes the states of Sabah and Sarawak as well as the federal territory of Labuan. East and West Malaysia together comprise a land base of 329,758 square kilometers (slightly larger than New Mexico). Thailand borders West Malaysia to the North and Singapore to the South. Sabah and Sarawak are bounded by Indonesia. Sarawak also shares a border with Brunei. According to the Maritime Institute of Malaysia, the total sea area of the country is almost twice its landmass, and the size of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) alone is approximately 453,186 square kilometers.<sup>306</sup> However, Malaysia's EEZ claim is much contested since Kuala Lumpur only issued a map showing the outer limits of the "Malaysian Territorial Waters" without promulgating the geographical

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<sup>306</sup> "Malaysia's Maritime Resources," Maritime Institute of Malaysia, accessed March 12, 2011, [http://www.mima.gov.my/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=28&limitstart=1](http://www.mima.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=28&limitstart=1).

coordinates for its territorial sea baselines, from which territorial sea is measured, according to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>307</sup>

Other than a smaller land base in comparison to its neighbors such as Thailand and Indonesia, the population is also modest with approximately 28.6 million people in 64 racial groups.<sup>308</sup> Yet, under the veil of national unity and respect for diversity is a strong sense of inter-racial tension between the major ethnicities in Malaysia: Malay (50.4% of the total population), Chinese (23.7%), Indigenous (11%), Indian (7.1%) and others (7.8%).<sup>309</sup> The nationally sanctioned New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1970, an affirmative action programme favoring the Bumiputra for the purposes of poverty reduction and wealth redistribution, further intensifies the animosity between the Bumiputra (sons of the soil or indigenous people) and the non-Bumiputra (mainly Chinese and Indian).

Although the country is recovering from the latest global recession, a weak microeconomic structure has long impaired Malaysia's ability to withstand external economic shocks as seen during the 1985 commodity shock and the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. In addition to poor corporate governance, weakness in the financial sector, fervent political aversion against external control (especially IMF conditionality), the excess spending propelled by NEP from 1970 to 2000 have

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<sup>307</sup> Max Herriman and Raja Petra Mohamed. "A Malacca Straits EEZ Boundary: Factors for Consideration," in *Towards Sustainable Management of the Straits of Malacca*, eds. M. Sheriff et al. Serdang, Malaysia: Malacca Straits Research and Development Center, 2000), 757.

<sup>308</sup> "Population Clock," Department of Statistics, Malaysia, accessed April 12, 2011, <http://www.statistics.gov.my/portal/index.php>.

<sup>309</sup> "Malaysia-People," CIA The World Factbook, accessed April 12, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>.

further contributed to the country's vulnerability to external adversities.<sup>310</sup>

Moreover, the state's disproportionate dependence on oil revenue also subjects the country to budget fragility and fluctuation in commodity prices.<sup>311</sup> In 2008 alone, oil revenue accounted for 44% of the government's revenue.

Other than objective smallness in territorial base, population, and economic performance, Malaysia has always presented itself as a small developing country vis-à-vis others in the international context. In particular, it is not uncommon to find Malaysian leaders portraying the world as unjust and inequitable. For example, in a state dinner with the German Chancellor in 2003, Dr. Mahathir, then prime minister, openly addressed the lack of influence of small states on the issue of western intervention in Iraq:

“... we the small countries now live in fear, not just of terrorists but also from unilateral actions by powerful countries. We can expect no protection from international organizations like the United Nations (UN) since powerful countries like the United States and Britain can attack Iraq without the sanction of the UN.”<sup>312</sup>

In many official publications, politicians point to the need for Malaysia “to speak up on issues that other developing countries feel constrained to voice for

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<sup>310</sup> Prema-Chandra Authukorala, “Malaysian Economy in Three Crises,” *Working Paper* 2010/12 (Canberra: Crawford School of Economics and Government, 2010).

<sup>311</sup> “Oil Money Fuels Malaysia's Economy,” *The Star* (Malaysia), June 20, 2009.

<sup>312</sup> “Dinner in Honor of H.E. Gerhard Schroeder, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,” The Office of Prime Minister, Malaysia, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003, accessed February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=mahathir&id=126>.



fear of retribution by the major, particularly western, powers.”<sup>313</sup> Solidarity with fellow developing countries, especially the Islamic world, has been a recurrent theme in Malaysia’s foreign and security policies. Kuala Lumpur has been playing an active role in setting the agenda for the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Conference.

Despite the fact that many developing countries, Malaysia included, may lack the capacity to solve developmental and security problems on their own, Kuala Lumpur is less in favor of foreign assistance (or directives), and instead advocates tenaciously for “indigenous solutions.”<sup>314</sup> If anything, Malaysia’s Third World Spokesmanship necessarily creates points of difference, if not frictions, between Malaysia and several western powers. Its stance on “indigenous solutions” may also limit the scope and extent of cooperation, if not inadvertently preventing cooperative security from taking place. Why is Malaysia, a self-perceived small developing country, willing to collide with others and forgo the possibilities of cooperation that may be conducive to national development, military and otherwise? Understanding Malaysia’s strategic culture may shed light on the country’s threat perception, propensities for cooperation and conflict, and the policy instruments chosen to address security issues.

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<sup>313</sup> “Malaysia’s Foreign Policy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, Accessed April 4, 2011, [http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/foreign\\_policy](http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/foreign_policy).

<sup>314</sup> Mohamed Aslam Haneef et al., “Islam and Economic Development” in *Malaysia at 50: Achievements and Aspirations*, edited by Syed Arabi Idid (Singapore: Thomson Learning, 2008), 138.

## Approximating Malaysia's Strategic Culture

Broadly speaking, strategic culture is about the norms and procedures of strategic decision making. It reflects a bounded rationality within which the policy makers correlate ends to means and objectives to capabilities. Specifically, strategic culture focuses on the use of force, military or otherwise, and goes beyond political culture in relation to external affairs.<sup>315</sup> Strategic decision makers shift back and forth between Kantian cooperation and Hobbesian conflict as no state can rely on one option perpetually. The bounded rationality, either zero-sum cost-benefit analysis or positive-sum absolute gains, is thus conditioned by the push and pull between the tendency for conflict and predisposition to cooperate.

### *Documents to be Content Analyzed*

The computer assisted content analysis software, General Inquirer, processed 8 defence and security related documents (see chart 5.1 below) with a total of 84,581 words. These are official documents published by the relevant agencies in Malaysia. Speeches by individual strategic decision makers are excluded from content analysis because the speeches may reflect more the personal views of the speech giver and less of a “consensus” between all political elites.

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<sup>315</sup> Michael J. Williams, *On Mars and Venus: Strategic Culture as an Intervening Variable in US and European Foreign Policy* (Munster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2005), 23.

Table 5.1: Malaysia Documents to be Content Analyzed

	Document Title	Word Count
1	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Malaysia Chapter, 2001	2,161
2	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Malaysia Chapter, 2008	4,408
3	ASEAN Regional Forum Annual Security Outlook, Malaysia Chapter, 2009	3,498
4	Defence White Paper, Honor and Sacrifice: The Malaysia Armed Forces 1994	23,616
5	Defence White Paper, Towards Defence Self-Reliance 1995	10,908
6	Defence White Paper, Malaysia Defence Policy, 2010	8,889
7	Malaysia Foreign Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010	5,472
8	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Strategic Plan 2009-2015	25,629
	Total	84,581

The three white papers published by the Malaysian Ministry of Defence in 1994, 1995, and 2010 are considered traditional defence white papers. All three documents contain information on Malaysia's defence and security policies, evaluation of the current and future security environment, identification of major threats to national security, bilateral and multilateral relations the state is currently engaged in, and lastly, information on the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) including force structure, plans for conventionalization<sup>316</sup> and modernization, and the roles the Armed Forces play in national defence, diplomacy, and development. The first two white papers provide a detailed account on the genesis and historical development of the MAF. The three white papers give a general impression that Malaysia has to be self-reliant for its defence needs. Moreover, Malaysia's selective bilateral relations with certain countries and selected participation in multilateral forums indicate that "Malaysia has never had permanent allies nor

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<sup>316</sup> The Malaysian version of military conventionalization mainly addresses the problem of inter- and intra service imbalance by reducing the size of the army and active combat personnel.

permanent enemies; it has always consistently worked on the basis of its permanent interests with all other nations be they big or small.”<sup>317</sup>

To date, Malaysia has only submitted three editions of Annual Security Outlook to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). No official explanation has been given for the omissions. In the three chapters submitted, Malaysia discussed major threats to national, regional, and global security as well as Malaysia’s role in regional and global peace. Only in its latest submission (2009) did Malaysia brief the Forum on its defence and security policies. As ASEAN became the cornerstone of Malaysia’s foreign policy, the bulk of Malaysia’s regional security outlook focuses significantly more on the security provisions legitimized by this regional organization such as The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

Due to the absence of defence and security documents available, two documents published by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Malaysia’s Foreign Policy 2010* and *Strategic Plan 2009-2015* are used as functional equivalents. The substitution is justified on the grounds that “the defence policy, which complements other domestic policies, is an extension of foreign policy which underscores that diplomacy is the first line of defence and the use of force as the last resort.”<sup>318</sup> The two documents provide a detailed account of the

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<sup>317</sup> Chandran Jeshurun. *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy 1957-2007*. Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2007), 350.

<sup>318</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 88.

evolution of Malaysia's foreign policy since independence as well as an overview of the current foreign policy objectives. The objectives include 1) the protection and promotion of Malaysia's interests in international relations through proactive diplomacy; 2) strengthening bilateral relations; 3) enhancing Malaysia's participation in multilateral forums; 4) promoting ASEAN as the primary catalyst for regional cooperation and stability; 5) public diplomacy; and 6) human capital development within the Ministry.<sup>319</sup> The Strategic Plan outlines the strategies, plans of action, and key performance indicators to actualize the objectives identified by the Ministry.

#### *Predisposition to Conflict vs. Predisposition to Cooperate*

General Inquirer discovers a total of 2,281 power-conflict words and 1,125 power-cooperation words. To better visualize the push and pull between the two tendencies, a column graph is made for the three categories of the document as well as an average score for all documents combined (see figure 5.1 below). In the case of Malaysia, there is a stronger tendency for conflict than for cooperate.

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<sup>319</sup> *Strategic Plan 2009-2015*, vii.

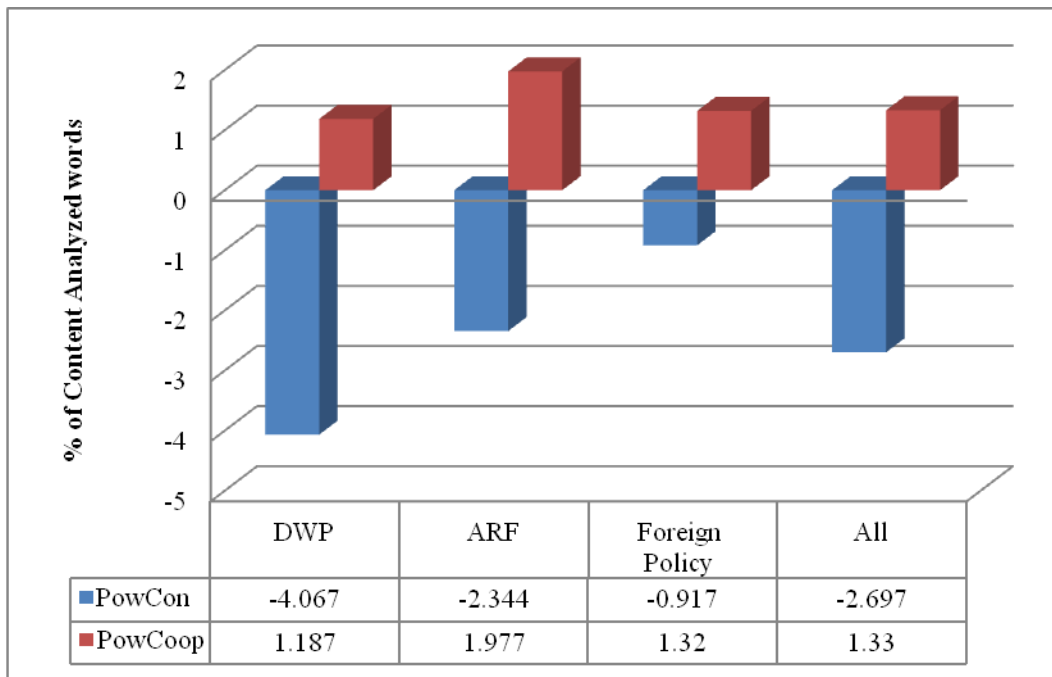


Figure 5.1: Approximating Malaysia's Strategic Culture

In the defence white paper category, GI identifies 1,758 power-conflict words and 513 power-cooperation words. The predisposition to conflict is more than three times stronger than the tendency for cooperation. This finding is expected as defence white papers by nature utilize more words related to defence, security, and the military. For example, the word “force” alone appears 192 times. However low, the tendency for cooperation is still visible. Yet, most of the defence cooperation initiatives are bilateral in nature. Malaysia is also careful in choosing its participation in multilateral security forums. Only ASEAN-led multilateral security forums such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Minister Meeting (ADMM) are discussed in the defence white

papers. Notably, the only reference to alliance is the Five Power Defence Arrangement.

In the ARF category, the predisposition for conflict is higher than the tendency to cooperate. This finding is unanticipated. Malaysia has always prided itself as a founding nation of ASEAN. It has actively participated in ASEAN related security forums and promoted confidence building in the region. There should be more discussion on how cooperative security has been carried out by Malaysia or at least the impetus for future cooperation. Yet, Malaysia is cognizant of the fact that “the diversity of the security environment, national interests, and differing policies of countries in the region may have prevented the development of a regional framework and/or an organization for regional cooperation.”<sup>320</sup> When the concept of self-reliance, the fundamental principle of Malaysia’s defence policy, is taken into account, it becomes clear that cooperation is not an automatic policy choice even when national security is breached.

The higher predisposition to cooperate in the foreign policy section is expected because foreign policy documents have less reference to military matters. Since proactive diplomacy is enshrined in Malaysia’s foreign policy as the primary instrument in conducting foreign relations, use of the force or the threat of using force should be the last resort. Although significantly lower than that of the two other categories, the tendency for conflict is still observable.

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<sup>320</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 59.

## The Constituent Elements of Malaysia's Strategic Culture

The constituent elements of Malaysia's Strategic Culture and their relative weight are determined first by grouping the 84,581 words into eight General Inquirer institutional categories (see figure 5.2 below). The eight categories comprise four ideational factors (religion, personal expression, doctrine, and academia) and four non-ideational ones (politics, military, economy, and legal). After gauging the relative weight of each category, relational content analysis follows to qualitatively uncover the meanings of the connection between words that frequently appear together in each category.

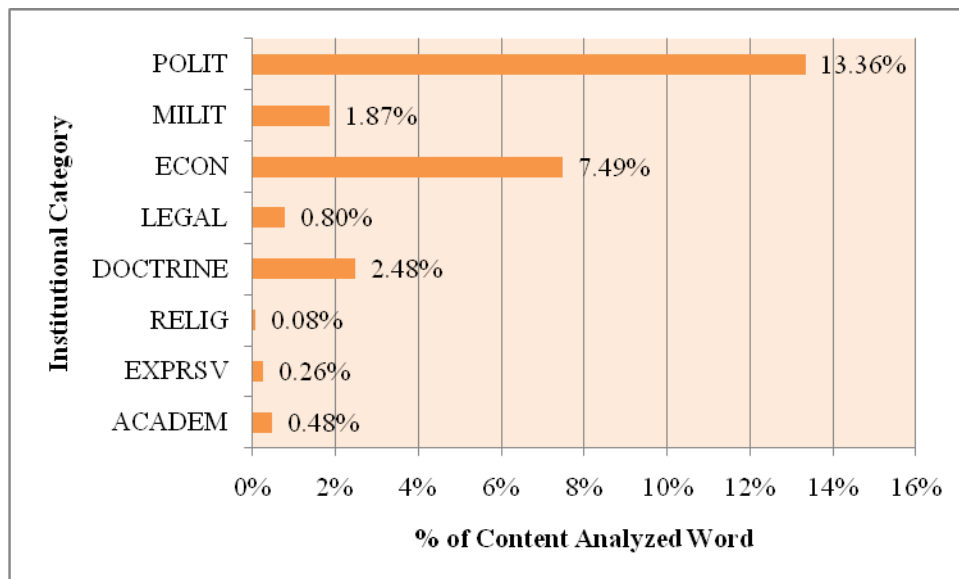


Figure 5.2: Content by Institutional Category, Malaysia



### *Ideational Factors*

#### DOCTRINE

The institutional category, *DOCTRINE*, refers to any organized system of belief or knowledge, including those of applied knowledge, mystical beliefs, and arts as an academic subject. Words such as conservation, liberation, precept, and specialization are subsumed under this category. GI identifies 2,100 words in this category. Though not directly collocated, further disambiguation and relational content analysis discovers a cluster of words that are positively correlated with the expression “force modernization” (see figure 5.3 below).

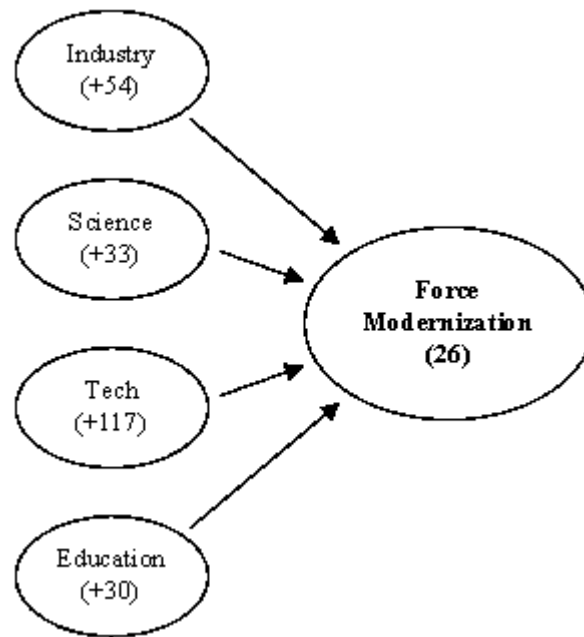


Figure 5.3: Collocation of “Force Modernization”

Since the early 1990s, the Malaysian Ministry of Defence has embarked on the dual program to conventionalize and modernize the armed forces. “Conventionalization is related to organization and doctrinal changes while modernization is synonymous with acquisition of technologically advanced weapon systems and equipment.”<sup>321</sup> According to the 1994 defence white paper, conventionalization is to be carried out at four different levels.<sup>322</sup> The first level is based on the concept of “MINDEF Incorporated”. It aims at integrating the three services of the armed forces with the civilian component of the Ministry of Defence. The second level is to reorganize the command and control of the armed forces by creating the Headquarters manned by personnel from all three services. The third level is to adjust the level of inter-service proportions by significantly reducing the size of the army while enhancing the combat capability of the air force and navy. Lastly, the Ministry attempts to correct the intra-service imbalance by enhancing the combat support units (engineering for example) and the combat service support units (medical for example) vis-à-vis the combat units.

With respect to modernization, other than continued sourcing from other countries, the 2010 defence white paper indicates a new policy to be implemented in the next ten years: achieving “self-reliance defence capability” by developing local defence industry as well as defence science and technology capabilities<sup>323</sup>.

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<sup>321</sup> *Honor and Sacrifice: The Malaysia Armed Forces*, 40.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 40-43.

<sup>323</sup> *Malaysia Defence Policy 2010*, vii.

At present, the local defence industry has been able to meet only limited needs especially in the areas of maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) activities, low level manufacturing of parts and components as well as sub-assemblies<sup>324</sup>. To accelerate development, a *Defence Industry Blueprint* was published in 2004 to address issues related to technology transfer through defence cooperation, offset programs, counter-trade programs, standardization of specification, and incentives to industry, to name just a few. As Malaysia depends on foreign defence purchases for industrial and technological spin-offs both in defence and non-defence sectors, observers claim that ad hoc offsets (mandatory, 50% worth of the deal) and uncoordinated counter-trades (up to 50% of the offset for each purchase) are not conducive to consistent weapons procurement plans and long term development of an indigenous base.<sup>325</sup> The contraction of the army, as instructed by the conventionalization plan, may also reduce local demands for small arms, light weapons, and armored vehicles, three major production lines of the Malaysia defence industry.<sup>326</sup>

In addition to conventionalization and modernization, the professionalization of military personnel is also an important aspect of the force modernization plan. The most noteworthy initiative in human resource

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<sup>324</sup> “Malaysia Not Yet Ready to Achieve Defence Self-Reliance,” *Oriental Daily News*, Malaysia, December 31, 2007.

<sup>325</sup> “Malaysia Takes On Corruption: Still Struggles To Control Offsets,” *Defense News*, May 5, 2008.

<sup>326</sup> Business Monitor International, *Malaysia Defence Security Report Q3 2010* (London: BMI, July 2010), 7.

development is the creation of the K-Force University Program in 2002. It is a distance learning program in partnership with the University of Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR) to provide opportunities for higher education and self-development to military officers.<sup>327</sup> To date, more than 1000 military personnel throughout Malaysia have acquired tertiary education through e-learning. Given the shortage of education facilities for military personnel, the National Defence University of Malaysia was established in 2006 in the Sungei Besi Camp, Kuala Lumpur to provide quality integrated military education and training to cadets who will join the armed forces upon graduation. The university will also take overseas students, mainly exchange students from military academies of other ASEAN countries, starting from July 2011.<sup>328</sup>

## ACADEM

The institutional category, *ACADEM*, contains words pertaining to academic, intellectual or education matters, including the names of major fields of study. Terms such as clinical, historian, museum, and scholar fall under this category. GI identifies 404 words in this particular category. With the exception of “education,” which has been addressed in the previous section, relational content analysis is unable to collocate words sharing meaningful connections.

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<sup>327</sup> Susan D’Antoni, ed., *The Virtual University: Lessons from Case Studies* (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2006), 6.

<sup>328</sup> “Transcript of the interview with Lt Jen Dato’ Pahlawan Hj Zukifli Bin Zainal Abidin, Vice Chancellor of National Defence University of Malaysia,” *World Report International* (April 23, 2010): 4.

This finding is not surprising as defence and military related documents by nature do not address academic or intellectual matters. There is some limited discussion on the need for indigenous research and development (R&D) in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and how such technology may help the armed forces develop cyber warfare capabilities. Although the Ministry of Defence identifies ICT along with joint operation as “force multipliers,” the latest defence white paper contains no information on the Ministry’s plan to actualize this goal.

## RELIG

The institutional category, *RELIG*, groups together words related to religious, metaphysical, supernatural or relevant philosophical matters. Words such as divinity, Islam, myth, and salvation are examples of this category. Out of 85,581 words, GI only uncovers 67 *RELIG* words. Although the word “Islam” appears 29 times, relational content analysis cannot identify any meaningful connections between Islam and other words. Whenever Islam is mentioned, it is often discussed in the context of *Islam Hadhari*, or literally, Civilized Islam. Envisioned by the former Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, it is an approach based on Islamic values towards progress and development. According to Badawi, all Muslims must demonstrate ten fundamental principles: 1) faith in God and piety; 2) a just and trustworthy government; 3) a free and independent people; 4) a vigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge; 5) balanced and comprehensive

economic development; 6) a good quality of life for the people; 7) protection of the rights of minority groups and women; 8) cultural and moral integrity; 9) safeguarding natural resources and the environment; 10) strong defence capabilities.<sup>329</sup>

Badawi believes that Islamic teaching is fully compatible with modernity and democracy. It is a “different” way for the Islamic community to achieve parity with the rest of the world. By using Malaysia as a success story, he openly encourages other Islamic countries to adopt the same approach to bring about progressive Islamic civilization. The concept has been accepted and acknowledged by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) member states during the 3rd Special Summit of the OIC in Makkah (Mecca, Saudi Arabia) in December 2005.<sup>330</sup> In Badawi’s words,

“... [i]t is not an approach to pacify the West. It is neither an approach to apologize for the perceived Islamic threat, nor an approach to seek approval from the non-Muslims for a more friendly and gentle image of Islam. It is an approach that seeks to make Muslims understand that progress is enjoined by Islam. It is an approach that is compatible with modernity and yet firmly rooted in the noble values and injunctions of Islam. It is an approach that values substance and not form.”<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Idid ed., “Introduction: Fifty Years in Brief,” in *Malaysia at 50: Achievements and Aspirations*, xxv.

<sup>330</sup> “Strategic Plan 2009-2015,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 28.

<sup>331</sup> “Islam Hadhari in a Multi-Racial Society: Remarks by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, at the Asia Society Austral-Asia Centre,” Office of the Prime Minister, Malaysia, April 8, 2008.

Although *Islam Hadhari* has won Malaysia some applause within the international Islamic community, it does not directly address the existing racial disharmony that has long been dubbed the “time bomb” of Malaysia. In reality, it offers no opportunity for non-Muslims in Malaysia to participate in the modernization project. Ironically, the movement further accentuates the difference between the Bumiputra (sons of the soil or indigenous people) and the non-Bumiputra (mainly Chinese and Indian). In addition, Baldawi’s vision places a high premium on the ability of the government, an Islamic government in this case, to provide the platforms for Muslims to accomplish the ten fundamental principles. This government-centric, if not authoritative top-down, approach inadvertently limits the ability of media and civil society organizations to act as policy gatekeepers. In fact, the government has identified non-government organizations and their demands as disruptive of social harmony and national security.<sup>332</sup> The line between religion and politics is thus muddled even when Malaysia is constitutionally declared a secular state.

## EXPRS

The last ideational institutional factor, *EXPRV*, denotes words related to arts, sports, and self-expression. Words such as image, marksman, orator, and verse are included in this category. Although GI identifies 217 words in this category, no meaningful connections between any pair of vocabularies can be

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<sup>332</sup> *Malaysia Defence Policy 2010*, 23.

discerned. This finding is not surprising as defence and security policies have little to do with arts and sports. While references to self-expression are absent from all the documents analyzed, allusions to collective will or national identity, the basis for social cohesion and communal harmony, are absent from the text as well. In spite of the fact that national unity is the most fundamental element of a state, both big and small, Malaysia's national security policy is unusually silent on this issue.

### *Non-Ideational Factors*

#### **POLIT**

The first non-ideational institutional category, *POLIT*, groups together words with clear political character, including political roles, collectivities, acts, ideas, ideologies, and symbols. Words such as diplomacy, frontier, segregation, and unification are examples of this category. With the 11,301 *POLIT* words identified by GI, *POLIT* ranks the highest in terms of relative weight in comparison to seven other categories. Relational content analysis uncovers three clusters of words surrounding the base terms "defence," "security," and "cooperation" respectively (see figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 below).

Figure 5.4 below depicts Malaysia's defence policy. The first sub-branch delineates Malaysia's national interests, which can be divided into three levels: strategic, regional, and global.<sup>333</sup> Strategic interests comprise the protection of

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<sup>333</sup> "Malaysia Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 89.



land territories, territorial waters, airspace, EEZ, and sea lines of communication.<sup>334</sup> Malaysia sees the existence of a peaceful and stable region most conducive to the development of the nation. It is also alarmed by the possible negative spillover effect the security issues from the bordering countries may bring to its national security. The global level interest is however stated in passing with globalization identified as the main source of concern. Overall, the number of co-occurrences indicates that protecting Malaysia's strategic interests is the most important task of the government.

The second sub-branch illustrates the guiding principles for safeguarding the above mentioned national interests. Above everything, Malaysia must rely on itself for its defence needs. The Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) must possess the capability to act independently without foreign assistance in matters concerning internal security. Taking into account the current phase of force modernization, foreign assistance is sought only if Malaysia's territorial integrity and security interests are compromised by high level external threats.<sup>335</sup> Total defence requires other sectors of the society to contribute to national defence both in peacetime and wartime. There are five facets to this concept: security readiness, economic resilience, social cohesiveness, psychological resilience, and civil preparedness. Next, the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FDPA) is the only mutual defence alliance that Malaysia is currently committed to. FDPA is of great value for two

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<sup>334</sup> *Malaysia Defence Policy 2010*, 11.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

reasons. First, the Armed Forces gains invaluable benefits from cross training and joint exercises under the Arrangement. Second and more importantly, it is an important political and security nexus between Malaysia and Singapore as the Arrangement provides “a tangible military link that binds the Armed Forces of both countries.”<sup>336</sup> As a responsible member of the global community, Malaysia sees its participation in UN mandated peacekeeping missions the most constructive way to contribute to world peace. Moreover, “Malaysia’s firm commitment to the UN Charter has made it to adopt a defensive defence posture.”<sup>337</sup> Lastly, Malaysia places emphasis on conflict prevention. Bilateral defence diplomacy and multilateral security forums provide Malaysia the venues to discuss potential sources of tension with other concerned states.

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<sup>336</sup> *Honor and Sacrifice: The Malaysia Armed Forces*, 160.

<sup>337</sup> *Towards Defence Self-Reliance*, 24.

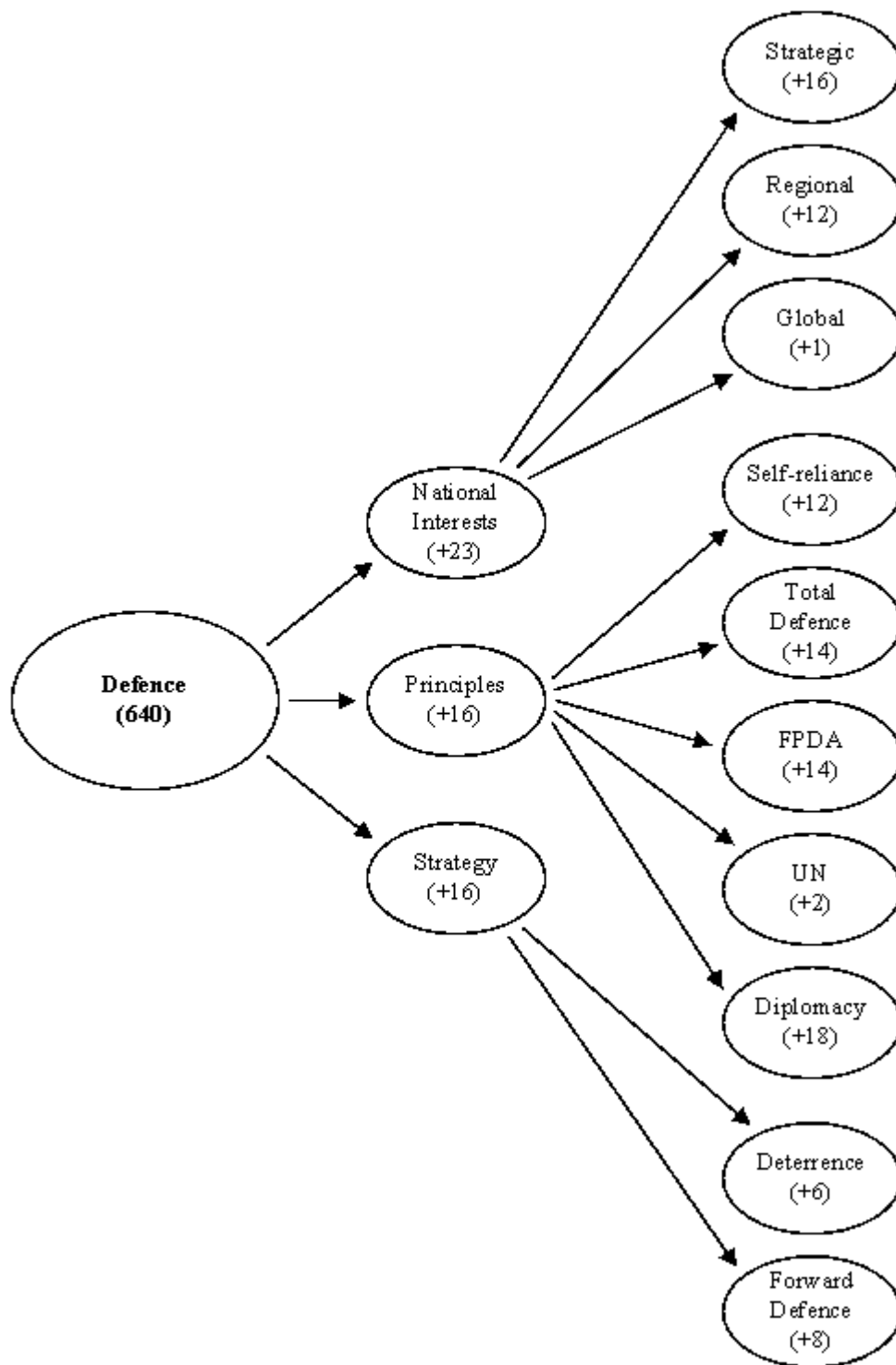


Figure 5.4: Collocation of “Defence”

The last sub-branch of this cluster touches on the doctrinal guidance on use of force. Deterrence is the keystone of Malaysia's defensive defense posture. It aims at discouraging potential adversaries from using force of any kind against Malaysia. Deterrence requires Malaysia to demonstrate capabilities such as state of preparedness and willingness to use force at all times. The concept of forward defense features an armed force that has the capacity to act beyond the boundaries of Malaysia through strategic rapid reaction to gain tactical advantage.<sup>338</sup> The government stresses that forward defense must not be mistaken as Malaysia's intent to develop power projection capability far beyond its national borders. Yet, there is no elaboration on the permissible distance from the national borders by which the MAF may operate without either contradicting the policy or alarming other states.

Figure 5.5 below depicts Malaysia's multifaceted threat perception, ranging from economic security to new forms of non-traditional threats. Other than the conventional focus of national security, Malaysia attaches great importance to regional security. In particular, ASEAN forms the core priority of Malaysia's current security and foreign policies as its neighbors are considered "the closest allies," albeit without formal alliance commitment.<sup>339</sup> Moreover, any internal security problems, particularly the separatist movements, emanating from the bordering states such as Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia,

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<sup>338</sup> *Malaysia Defence Policy 2010*, 46.

<sup>339</sup> *Malaysia's Foreign Policy 2010*.

may have immediate negative ramifications on regional stability in general and Malaysia's national security in particular. In light of the heightened sensitivity attached to "everyday security problems," Malaysia reiterates the three guiding principles when dealing with political and sovereignty issues: 1) non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighboring countries; 2) no support for any struggle by groups that would affect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any country; and 3) not granting political asylum to any members or leaders of such separatist groups.<sup>340</sup>

In the greater Asia Pacific region, Malaysia is especially concerned with territorial disputes in the South China Sea. As Malaysia's economic and energy security depend greatly on fishery resources and hydrocarbons, the protection of its EEZ and continental shelf becomes one of the priorities of national defence. Yet, the overlapping territorial claims in the area necessarily complicate the prospect of peaceful resolution of the disputes. Malaysia is somewhat optimistic about stability in the South China Sea. Kuala Lumpur treats the South China Sea issue as a constellation of many bilateral disputes that can be resolved through bilateral mechanisms such as joint exploration or third party arbitration. Bilateral disputes, stated by Malaysia, "do not in any way act as impediments to ASEAN cooperation."<sup>341</sup> Yet, it is known that Malaysia has maintained an uninterrupted military presence on the Ardasier Reef, Mariveles Reef, and the Swallow Reef to

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<sup>340</sup> "Malaysia Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 84.

<sup>341</sup> "Malaysia Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 52.

reinforce and defend its claims. Interestingly, the documents portray China, an extra-regional claimant to the dispute with growing military presence in the region, not only as an opportunity but also “a staunch friend of ASEAN.”<sup>342</sup>

Malaysia’s long coastline and the physical separation of the two landmasses by part of the South China Sea prompt the government to invest in maritime security. Other than guarding its maritime strategic interests, Malaysia, as its neighbors, is equally confronted with the problems of piracy, maritime crimes, and terrorism. To better coordinate law enforcement on the sea, the Maritime Enforcement Agency of Malaysia (MMEA) was established in 2005. Under the Maritime Enforcement Agency Act 2004, MMEA is authorized to enforce Malaysia’s maritime acts and laws such as the Continental Shelf Act (1966), the Exclusive Economic Zone Act 1984, Fisheries Act 1985, Environmental Quality Act 1974, and the Merchant Shipping Ordinance 1952 (amended 2005). Two surveillance systems are also operational, namely, the Sea Surveillance System (SWASLA) manned by MMEA and the Automatic Identification System (AIS) run by the Marine Department.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> *Malaysia’s Foreign Policy 2010*.

<sup>343</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 87.

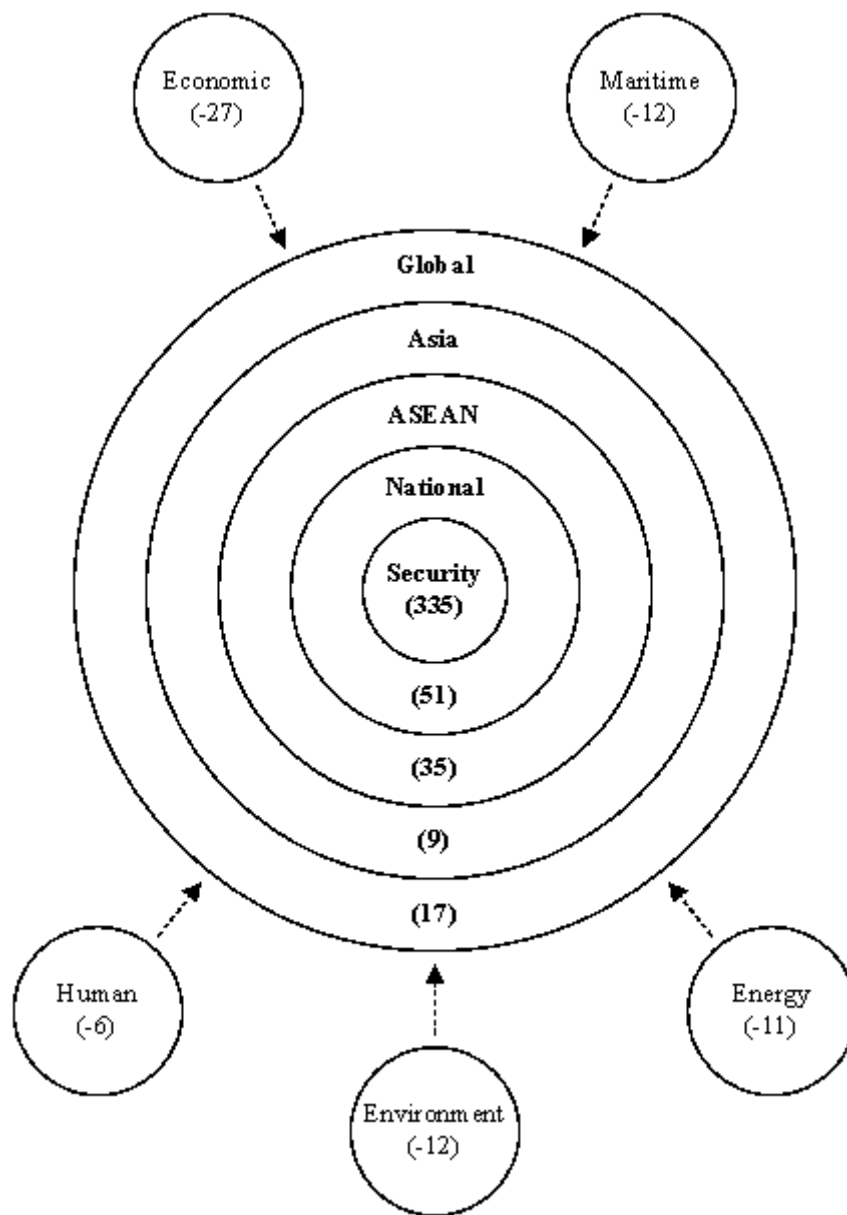


Figure 5.5: Collocation of “Security”

With regard to safety and security in the Malacca Straits, Malaysia believes that “the focus should be on how cooperation between littoral states and user states could continue to be further enhanced without impacting on the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of the former.”<sup>344</sup> Apparently, the value the littoral states place on sovereignty outweighs the potential security benefit joint patrols may bring about. This is evident in Malaysia’s refusal to include security cooperation in the 2007 Cooperative Mechanism and its reluctance in allowing ships in the Malacca Straits Patrols (MSP) the right of hot pursuit beyond five nautical miles into the neighbor’s territorial water.<sup>345</sup> The MSP, according to Simon, is in actuality “more coordinated than joint, with each country responsible for patrolling its own sector and each ship under national command.”<sup>346</sup>

Figure 5.6 below illustrates Malaysia’s patterns of cooperation. In theory, Malaysia places equal value on bilateral and multilateral cooperation. In practice, however, bilateral engagement appears to be the preferred policy instrument in conducting Malaysia’s security policy. For example, Malaysia has pursued bilateral cooperation through the establishment of Joint Commissions. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Joint Commission is a channel used by two countries to discuss all issues of mutual interests<sup>347</sup>. Substantive bilateral cooperation is carried out only after the two countries signed the Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation Agreement (ESTCA). The Ministry takes the lead when it hosts a Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and

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<sup>344</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2008*, 57.

<sup>345</sup> Sheldon Simon, “Safety and Security in the Malacca Straits: The Limits of Collaboration,” *Asia Security* 7, no. 1 (2011): 1-17.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>347</sup> “Joint Commissions,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, accessed on April 12, 2011, [http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/bd-joint\\_commissions](http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/bd-joint_commissions).



other relevant agencies may participate in it. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia has established separate Joint Commissions with Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam<sup>348</sup>. Even within ASEAN, the cornerstone of Malaysia's security and foreign policies, cooperation is limited to functional terms on a sub-regional basis such as the ASEAN Mekong Development Cooperation and the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT).<sup>349</sup> Region-wide cooperation is concentrated in trade and investment as seen in the implementation of the ASEAN investment area.

In the area of security cooperation, Malaysia sees the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) the main venue for member states and dialogue partners to “discuss” security matters. Yet, Malaysia is not enthusiastic about turning the ARF or ASEAN into concrete cooperative security architecture. “As the ARF originally was not perceived nor structured as a mechanism to solve crises in the region, its process should evolve at a pace comfortable to all ARF participants and on the basis of consensus.”<sup>350</sup> Moreover, the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) is only good for transparency and confidence building, not for defense cooperation or alliance making.<sup>351</sup> In effect, Malaysia has long concluded that (new) military alliances will perpetuate the climate of mistrust and rivalry among

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<sup>348</sup> *Malaysia's Foreign Policy 2010*.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2001*.

<sup>351</sup> *Malaysia's National Defence Policy 2010*, 39.

countries in the region.<sup>352</sup> Any defensive weapon systems acquired by the alliance members inadvertently carry offensive capabilities that may destabilize the strategic balance in the region.

Instead of multilateral defence cooperation, Malaysia has been conducting defence diplomacy at a bilateral level through the Malaysian Defence Cooperation Program (MDCP). Mutual understanding can be gained by having military officers from other countries train at the facilities in Malaysia. Other than the exchange of personnel, Malaysia has conducted bilateral defence cooperation with most ASEAN members and several non-Asian states. Kuala Lumpur believes that these relationships may provide opportunities for professional training, technical assistance, technology transfer, and sources for defense equipment procurement. Malaysia purposely seeks defense technologies and equipment from varied sources so as not to over rely on any one supplier. Two obvious problems attached to the multiple sources of armed procurement are the question of interoperability and the added difficulty in maintenance.

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<sup>352</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2001*.

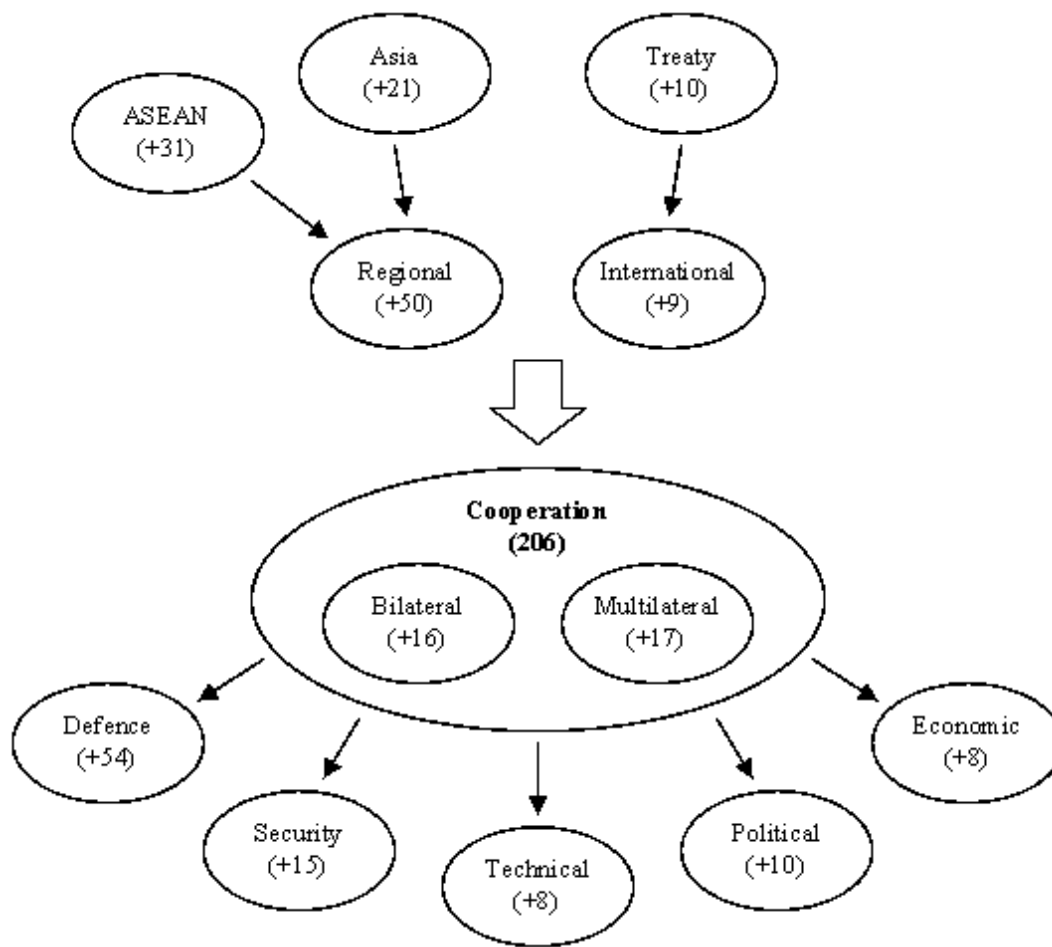


Figure 5.6: Collocation of “Cooperation”

Of the non-ASEAN states, Malaysia considers relationships with Australia, New Zealand, US, several European countries, Russia, China, India, and Pakistan important as defense cooperation can bring about positive externalities to other areas of cooperation. It is striking that Malaysia is not shy to publicly articulate the view that cooperative relations with some countries like South Africa, Sweden, Ukraine and Spain are more for the acquisition of military

equipment and not for the development of a friendly relationship.<sup>353</sup> Moreover, Malaysia should also be able to manage “the risk of entrapment and over-dependence on certain powers already present or emerging in the region.”<sup>354</sup>

In the context of international cooperation, Malaysia welcomes multilateral efforts, peacekeeping missions in particular, under the auspices of the United Nations. As a “small developing country player” in the international arena, Malaysia sees the need to uphold the UN charter as a defence of last resort because only the UN can provide legitimacy to international order.<sup>355</sup> But Malaysia’s support for the organization is not unconditional. Malaysia periodically criticizes the “undemocratic aspects” of the United Nations, especially the Security Council and the veto power enjoyed by the “permanent” members. This view is best illustrated by the famous speech delivered by the former Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir, at the 48<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly in New York on October 1, 1993:

“... We can accept some weightage for them, but for each of them alone, to be more powerful than the whole membership of the United Nations is not acceptable; not before, not now and not for the future. There can be for the time being some permanent members. But the veto must go...”<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> *Malaysia’s National Defence Policy 2010*, 42.

<sup>354</sup> *Towards Defence Self-Reliance*, 13.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> “The Plenary of The Forty-Eighth Session of The United Nations General Assembly,” The Prime Minister’s Office, Malaysia, Oct. 1, 1993, accessed October 16, 2010, <http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=mahathir&id=1547>.

## MILIT

Closely related to *POLIT* is the institutional category denoting military matters, MILIT. Words such as ambush, commander, fleet and troop are examples of this category. Of the 8 documents processed, GI identifies 1,582 words in this category. Relational content analysis isolates a cluster of words centering on the Malaysian Armed Forces (see figure 5.7 below). According to the latest *Military Balance*, the entire Armed Forces consists of approximately 109,000 officers and enlisted personnel, including 80,000 in the army, 15,000 in the air force, and 14,000 in the navy.<sup>357</sup> The reserve is estimated to be 51,600 persons, including 50,000 in the army, 600 in the air force, and 1000 in the navy.

To better shore up its defense needs, Malaysia has embarked on a dual program of conventionalization and modernization named the Versatile Malaysian Armed Forces of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (VMAF21). Eliciting strong suspicion from its neighbors, the Ministry of Defence reiterates that Malaysia does not have any specific threats in mind when purchasing such big ticket items as multiple rocket launchers, submarines, and fighter jets. The modernization effort is mainly due to the fact that MAF needs to catch up and stay abreast with modern defense technology, especially in the area of Information and Communication Technology

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<sup>357</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance 2010*.

(ICT)<sup>358</sup>. Since the late 1990s, Malaysia has spent over \$5 billion on arms and become one of the largest arms buyers in Southeast Asia.<sup>359</sup>

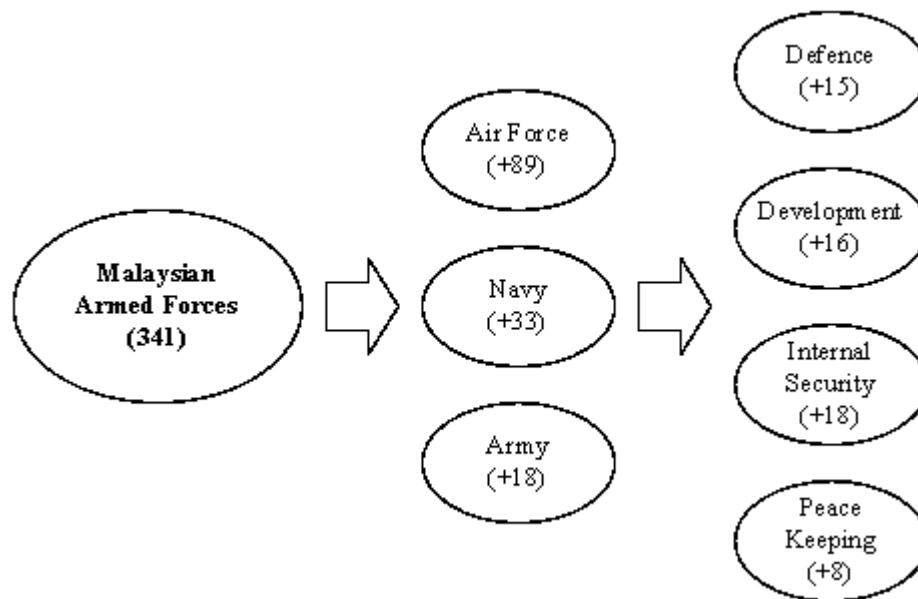


Figure 5.7: Collocation of “Malaysian Armed Forces”

One of the priorities in the modernization program is to establish effective air space control, “the prerequisite for the successful execution of operations by land, sea, and air.”<sup>360</sup> As a result, the procurement plan seems to favor the air force at the expense of other two services. Malaysia has purchased 18 Su-

<sup>358</sup> Jatswan S. Sidhu. “Malaysia’s Defence and Security Since 1957: An Overview,” *Malaysia Defence and Security Since 1957*, edited Abdul Razak Baginda (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Strategic Research Center, 2009), 27.

<sup>359</sup> Richard F. Grimmett, *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 1997-2004*, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 29, 2005), 50; *Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2001-2008* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service September 4, 2009), 45, 59-60.

<sup>360</sup> *Malaysia’s Defence Policy 2010*, 54.

30MKM Flankers from Russia at a cost of \$900 million in 2003.<sup>361</sup> In an interview with the *Kuala Lumpur Security Review*, the Chief of the Air Force in 2008 previewed the procurement plan for the near future, including airborne early warning and control aircraft (AEW&C), a medium range air defense system, six squadrons of Multi Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA), as well as software upgrades for six new SU30MKMs.<sup>362</sup>

In addition to national defence, the MAF is tasked with maintaining internal security, development, and participation in defence diplomacy mainly through joint exercises and UN peacekeeping missions. The MAF prides itself as a professional military. As a result, Malaysia is one of the countries in the region “where the military has not intervened in politics and where civilian authorities have continued in power since independence.”<sup>363</sup> According to Ra’ees, several factors have contributed to the “non-interventionist attitude” and subservience to civilian leadership: 1) constitutional constraints, 2) the evolution of the armed forces, 3) shared social background between political and military elites; 4) Malay domination in the MAF; and lastly, 5) the convergence of interests between civilian and military leaders.<sup>364</sup> The MAF is to assist the civil authorities in

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<sup>361</sup> Andrew Tan. “Force Modernization Trends in Southeast Asia,” *Working Paper 59*, (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 2004b), 11.

<sup>362</sup> “Interview with the Chief of Malaysian Air Force,” *Kuala Lumpur Security Review*, June 15, 2008, accessed on November 29, 2010, [http://www.klsreview.com/HTML/2008Jul\\_Dec/20080615\\_02.html](http://www.klsreview.com/HTML/2008Jul_Dec/20080615_02.html).

<sup>363</sup> Paridah Samad, *Tun Abdul Razak: A Phenomenon in Malaysian Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Partisan Publication, 2001), 106.

<sup>364</sup> Wahabuddin Ra’ees, “Military-Civilian Relations,” in *Malaysia at 50*, 213.

combating internal threats, restore and maintain public order, and in disaster relief missions. The key word is “to assist,” not to take over.

Before the communist threat was fully eradicated in Malaysia, the military had devised the KESBAN (Security and Development) program to neutralize the threat by bringing socio-economic development to affected areas, especially those along the borders. Apart from KESBAN, small units of MAF personnel were engaged in minor relief and assistance missions to the more isolated and secluded settlements under the Jiwa Murni’ program. Lastly, MAF was also active under the Tentera Bersama Rakyat’ program to provide services such as education and basic infrastructure construction by utilizing military resources. However, as the military gradually conventionalized and modernized, its role in national development has been returned to its primary responsibility, namely, defending the sovereignty and strategic interests of Malaysia against external threats. In other words, the military now contributes to national development by offering security.

Lastly, the Armed Forces contribute towards world peace and stability through UN peacekeeping operations. To date, Malaysia has participated in 14 missions, 4 of which are ongoing.<sup>365</sup> The Multilateral Political Affairs Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is tasked with formulating Malaysia’s position

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<sup>365</sup> “Peacekeeping Missions,” The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, accessed on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping>.



regarding issues related to international peace and security, peacekeeping operations, and peace-building questions in the United Nations.<sup>366</sup>

## ECON

The next institutional category, *ECON*, refers to words of an economic, commercial, industrial, or business orientation. Words such as antitrust, budgetary, fund, and manpower fall within this category. GI identifies 6,334 *ECON* words, the second highest ranking category in terms of relative weight. Relational content analysis uncovers a cluster of words surrounding the most frequently referenced term in this group, “economy” (and its associated terms such as “economic” and “economically”) with a total of 258 times.

Figure 5.8 below shows that Malaysia’s economy has been negatively affected by successive financial crises and recessions. The major economic concerns in the medium term include slower global economic growth, on-going structural adjustment, and fast paced technological advances.<sup>367</sup> To better prepare for a more integrated global economy, Malaysia is advocating collective regional responses and economic resilience vis-à-vis foreign (extra-regional) assistance. Malaysia’s approach to globalization in general and future financial crises in particular, according to Dr. Mahathir, has always been guided by the principle that the pace of globalization in Malaysia at least must be on Malaysia’s terms,

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<sup>366</sup> *Strategic Plan 2009-2015*, 40.

<sup>367</sup> “Malaysia Chapter,” *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2001*.

based on local circumstances, interests, and priorities.<sup>368</sup> Malaysia's experience during the Asian Financial crisis has boosted its confidence as a small developing country in dealing with external shocks without the assistance and directives from foreign entities. The pride of being a successful story is best captured in the remark by Badawi, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia:

“... But in the final analysis, it was our ability to act rationally, independently and not merely follow conventional orthodoxy that saw us introducing successfully the bold solutions, which are now being acknowledged by the IMF, then one of our biggest critics, as a case study.”<sup>369</sup>

Trade and offshore resources are two major sectors of Malaysia's economy. In effect, in the period of Jan-Feb 2011 alone crude petroleum and refined petroleum products account for 10.9% of Malaysia's total export at the value of RM 11.7 billion (approximately US\$ 3.88 billion).<sup>370</sup> The protection of its economic interests and offshore resources has always ranked high in Kuala Lumpur's agenda. However, even in the context of globalization, Malaysia's economic policy has historically reflected a strong nationalistic character. Starting from the “Buy British Last” (BBL) policy in 1981, Malaysia has gradually shifted

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<sup>368</sup> “Malaysia's Strategies to Deal With the Financial Crisis as Related to the Impact of Globalization in Developing Countries: Speech delivered by Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohammad at University of Cairo on June 20, 2000,” Office of the Prime Minister, Malaysia, accessed on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=mahathir&id=1753>.

<sup>369</sup> “Malaysian Business Corporate Governance Award 2002 Presentation Ceremony: Speech delivered by Datuk Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi on January 14, 2003,” Office of Prime Ministry, Malaysia, accessed on January 15, 2011, <http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan/?m=p&p=paklahtpm&id=3295>.

<sup>370</sup> “Press Release: Malaysia External Trade Statistics Feb 2011,” Malaysia External Trade Development Cooperation, April 5, 2011.

its focus to trading with countries in the vicinity. The “Look East Policy” of the same year aimed at bringing Japanese models of business and Japanese Foreign direct investment (FDI) into Malaysia. The more recent involvement in the South-South Cooperation sought to promote solidarity with fellow developing countries and the Muslim world. The latest invention of “Prosper Thy Neighbor” policy proposes enhanced economic relations and cooperation with neighboring countries. All in all, these economic policies while not severing ties with Malaysia’s major developed nation trading partners, at the same time allows Kuala Lumpur to be the champion of the less developed world.<sup>371</sup>

In 2010, Singapore (13.4% of Malaysia’s total exports), the People’s Republic of China (12.6%), Japan (10.4%), the United States (9.5%), and Thailand (5.3%). remained the top five destinations for Malaysia’s export. A burgeoning India has risen to be a new market for Malaysia’s products, accounting for 3.3% of the total export last year. The European Union as a whole has been a stable market. In December 2010, exports to EU were valued at approximately US\$2 billion.<sup>372</sup> Paradoxically, although Malaysia is sometimes at odds with the “developed” world, when it comes to trade and investment “there is no contradiction between Malaysia’s justifiable criticisms of the West on certain

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<sup>371</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era 1981-2003: Dilemma of Development* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 213.

<sup>372</sup> “Press Release: Malaysia’s Trade Performance in 2010,” Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia, Feb. 2, 2011, accessed April 22, 2011, <http://www.matrade.gov.my/en/malaysia-exporters-section/122-trade-performance-2010/1105-malaysias-trade-performance-in-2010>.

issues and our continued acceptance of western countries as a market for our products and as a source for investment in our country.”<sup>373</sup>

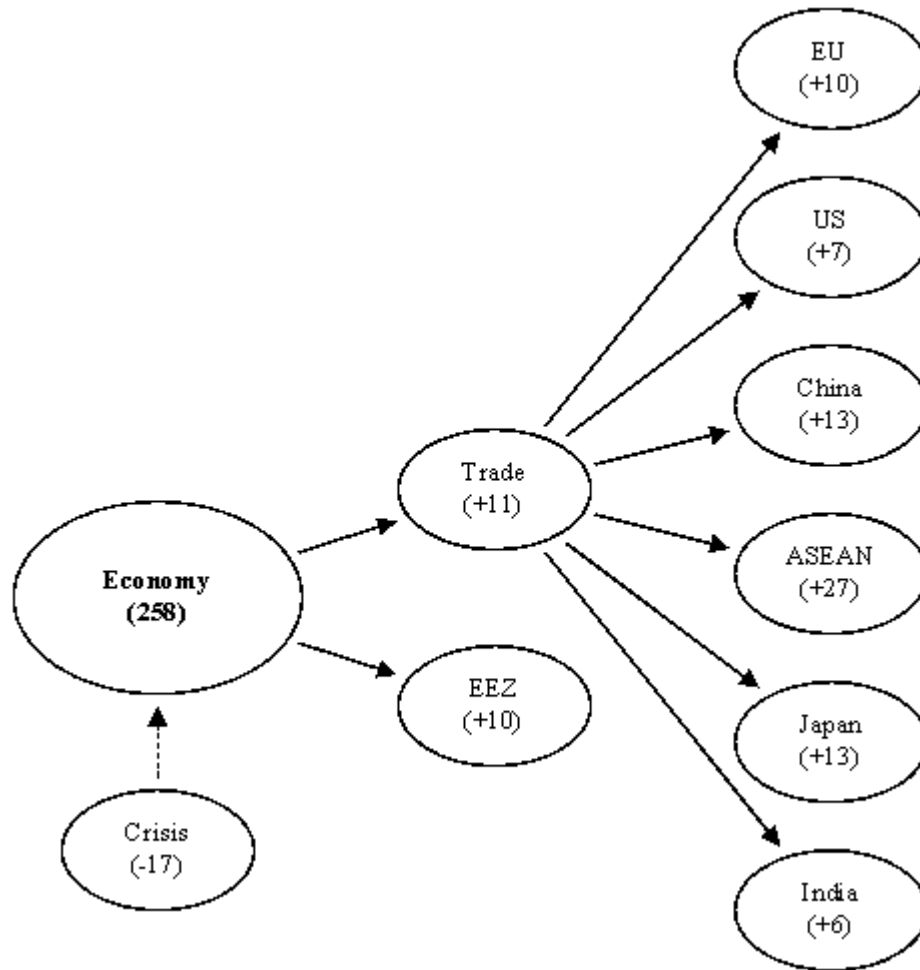


Figure 5.8: Collocation of “Economy”

<sup>373</sup> *Malaysia’s Foreign Policy 2010.*

## LEGAL

The last non-institutional category, *LEGAL*, features a group of words relating to legal, judicial, or police matters. Words such as court, indictment, probation and robbery are examples of this category. GI identifies 673 words with clear LEGAL character. Relational content analysis uncovers a cluster of words surrounding “crime” (see figure 5.9 below). Organized crime, transnational crimes, and terrorist attacks are identified by the Malaysian government as threats of increasing significance to national security. Organized crime, especially human trafficking and illicit drug trade, are transnational in nature and require cooperation from other affected countries in the region.

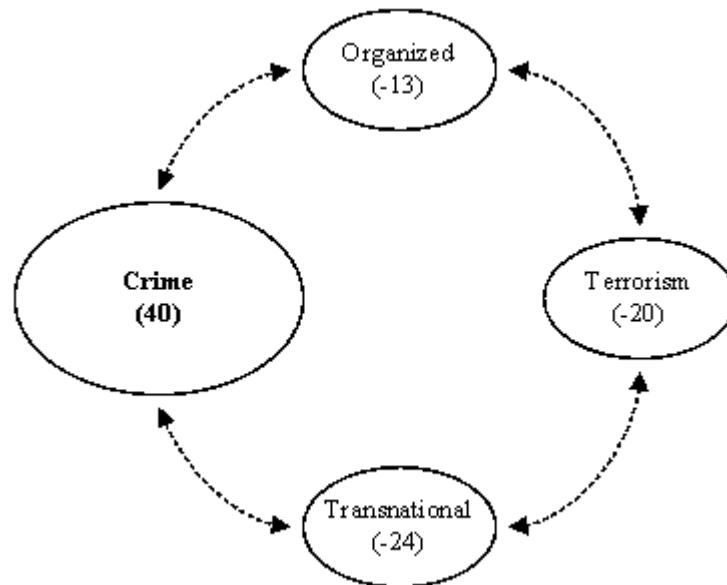


Figure 5.9: Collocation of “Crime”

However, Malaysia appears to be less affected by the problem of trafficking in persons. There is no immediate policy response to this problem other than participation in the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) project to help train judges and prosecutors on the legal concepts, trial issues, and practical concerns often implicated in cases of human trafficking.<sup>374</sup> In the case of illicit drug trade, other than participating in the UN organized drug control initiatives and the establishment of the ASEAN Training Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has also signed five bilateral drug control agreements with the United States (1989), United Kingdom (1989), Venezuela (1990), Russia (1999), and Hong Kong SAR (2003). There is no explanation on why these countries were chosen for bilateral drug control cooperation but not those countries deeply affected by the same problem in the region. Lastly, Malaysia's counter-terrorism effort emphasizes capacity building and mutual legal assistance. It has offered training sessions through the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT). It also took the initiative to prepare the text of the proposed the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty for like-minded ASEAN Member Countries, which was signed by eight ASEAN countries in Kuala Lumpur on November 29, 2004. However, there is no discussion on bilateral cooperation on this issue.

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<sup>374</sup> "Malaysia Chapter," *ARF Annual Security Outlook 2009*, 85.

## Conclusion

In Malaysia's case, conceptual content analysis delineates a strategic culture leaning toward the Hobbesian end of the spectrum with a much stronger disposition to conflict than to cooperate. Overall, non-ideational factors (POLIT, MILIT, ECON, and LEGAL) weigh more heavily relative to the ideational ones (DOCTRINE, RELIG, EXPRSV, AND ACADEM) in constituting Malaysia's strategic culture. Specifically, political, military, and economic concerns trump other factors to be the most significant drivers of Malaysia's security, defence, and foreign policies.

Relational content analysis identifies two situational considerations and one psychological consideration that shape Malaysia's policy responses to security problems. First, Malaysia's geophysical location (two separated land masses, long coast line, and overlapping territorial claims) and the need to protect its geo-economic interests determine much of its defence needs. The goal is to prevent any conflict or disruption of peace from taking place on Malaysian soil. It thus calls for conflict prevention, the application of a denial strategy, and the development of a credible air force equipped with added surveillance and early warning capabilities.

Second, the scope and extent of any cooperation, bilateral or multilateral, are necessarily limited by Malaysia's insistence on upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbors. Cooperation is carried out in functional terms only, if not

ad hoc in nature. This trend, in the long run, stifles the positive spillover effect genuine cooperation may bring about between countries.

Lastly, Malaysia's world view is best characterized by the dichotomies of big vs. small, North vs. South, West vs. East, core vs. periphery, and the developed vs. the less developed. Embedded in these dichotomies, as suggested by Wallerstein's World Systems theory, are the intrinsic struggles for control between the two parties. While acknowledging itself a small country in the East with a peripheral developmental status, Malaysia sees the need to make its presence felt whenever possible. Its economic success relative to other small states has empowered Kuala Lumpur to champion the issues of the Islamic community, third world developmental problems, the imposition of the Western notions of human rights on non-western societies, and the Israeli-Palestine conflict, to name just a few. It effectively creates an impression that Malaysia will not blindly accommodate foreign demands. By doing so, Malaysia wants to demonstrate that "a small developing country player" can also exercise some influence in setting the international agenda through sophisticated and well-articulated views.



## Chapter 6

### OPERATIONALIZED MARITIME SECURITY REGIMES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

#### Maritime Security in Southeast Asia

Located between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and peninsular Malaysia, the Strait of Malacca, among other waterways in Southeast Asia, is the seaborne trade nexus linking major Asian economies to the rest of the world, and vice versa. With a length of 805 kilometers, the Strait is the shortest sea route between the Persian Gulf and the East, connecting the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also the lifeline of global economy. The growth of international trade brings about commensurate increase in the traffic passing through the channel. According to the Maritime Institute of Malaysia, the number of merchant vessels exceeding 300 gross register tonnage (GRT) passing through the Straits increased by 37 per cent between 2000 and 2008. Liquefied natural and petroleum (LNG/LPG) tankers registered 26 percent growth from 2,962 to 3,726 while container and general cargo vessels rose 41 percent over the same period of time.<sup>375</sup> Japan's International Transport Institute estimates that traffic in the strait will increase further to approximately 141,000 vessels in 2020.<sup>376</sup> In fact, it is one of the world's oil transit chokepoints with an estimated

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<sup>375</sup> Center for the Strait of Malacca (SOM), Maritime Institute of Malaysia, accessed on March 14, 2011, <http://www.mima.gov.my/>.

<sup>376</sup> "Securing the Straits," *New Straits Times* (Jakarta), October 18, 2007.

13.6 million barrels per day flow in 2009.<sup>377</sup> Together, with over 50,000 larger ships passing through the Strait annually and carrying a quarter of the world's maritime trade onboard, safety and security of navigation in the regional waterways are pivotal to the well-being of local and global economies.<sup>378</sup>

Yet, the regional waterways are clearly not the safest places to traverse. Existing security issues such as people smuggling, human trafficking, small arms trafficking, illicit drug trade, and piracy are further compounded by the possibility of terrorist attacks. In fact, there has been a 60% increase in the total number of actual or attempted incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships reported in Asia in 2010 compared to 2009: a total of 164 incidents, most of which took place in the Arabian Sea, South China Sea, and the coasts of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.<sup>379</sup> In particular, tankers have been the most common target of maritime predation in the Asian waters.<sup>380</sup> It is estimated that piracy and armed robberies against ships in Southeast Asia alone are costing the

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<sup>377</sup> "World Oil Transit Chokepoints," U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Accessed on April 3, 2011, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=WOTC#malacca>.

<sup>378</sup> Rommel C. Banlaoi, "Maritime Security Threats in Post-9/11 southeast Asia," in Lloyd's MIU Handbook of Maritime Security, eds. Rupert Herbert-Burns, Sam Bateman and Peter Lehr (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 255.

<sup>379</sup> "ReCAAP ISC Annual Report: January to December 2010," The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, Information Sharing Centre, Singapore, Feb. 22, 2011, 2, accessed on March 18, 2011, <http://www.recaap.org/AlertsReports/IncidentReports.aspx>.

<sup>380</sup> "Pirates in Asia continue to target tankers: ReCAAP," *Platts Oilgram News*, Nov. 2, 2007.

region about U.S. \$500 million and the world U.S. \$25 billion a year.<sup>381</sup> The enormous resources (military, technical, and monetary) required for solving these security problems are beyond the capacity of any one of the coastal states. “The reality is we need more resources to ensure the level of security of the straits and the only way to do it is to get the international community [involved]...” said Najib, the Malaysian prime minister.<sup>382</sup> Even when individual states are committed to strengthen maritime security, Singapore’s deputy prime minister once expressed that “individual state action is not enough. The oceans are indivisible and maritime security threats do not respect boundaries.”<sup>383</sup>

#### Cooperative Security in the Maritime Domain

Despite years of practices in confidence measures building (CMB), dialogues, and an urgent need for collaborative actions, security regionalism in Southeast Asia is still a “weak reed.”<sup>384</sup> In most cases, cooperation remains at the policy level and takes the forms of joint declarations or memorandums of understanding (MOU) without being operationalized. Specifically, effective

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<sup>381</sup> “Asia Piracy Costs \$25 bln A Year, Says Experts,” *Reuters News Service* (Singapore), December 11, 2002; Bintan Eric Ellis, “Piracy on the High Seas is on the Rise in Southeast Asia,” *Fortune*, September 29, 2003.

<sup>382</sup> “Littoral States Agrees to Air Patrol Over Straits of Malacca,” *The Sun Daily* (Selangor, Malaysia), August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005.

<sup>383</sup> “Policy the Sea is a Job for Everyone,” *The Strait Times* (Singapore), June 3, 2003.

<sup>384</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, “Southeast Asian International Relations: Is there Institutional Traction?” in *International Relations in Southeast Asia: between Bilateralism and Multilateralism*, eds. N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 57.

multilateral security cooperation is hampered by low interoperability between the armed forces in the region (and outside the region), lingering intramural distrust rooted in historical enmity, as well as the lack of motivation and/or capacity to commit to joint maritime security arrangements.<sup>385</sup> These security deficiencies notwithstanding, the strategic value of the regional waterways to the global economy has propelled regional and extra-regional stake-holders to propose numerous multilateral mechanisms to cope with a host of maritime transnational crimes.

This first half of this chapter surveys four recent successful and failed attempts by regional and extra-regional powers to actualize maritime security cooperation at the operational level: Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAPP) initiated by Japan in 2001, Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) proposed by the United States in 2003, the Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP) launched by Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia in 2004, and lastly, Cooperative Mechanisms administered by the three littoral states in consultation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2007. The second half of the chapter focuses on how strategic culture, as an intervening variable, might have affected the enthusiasm of Singapore and Malaysia to welcome and adopt these measures. Each government's decisions on endorsing or rejecting the initiatives are analyzed from three criteria of strategic evaluation: suitability, feasibility, and acceptability.

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

Operationalized security cooperation “is a specific type and degree of cooperation in which policies addressing common threats can be carried out by midlevel officials of the states involved without immediate or direct supervision from strategic-level authorities.”<sup>386</sup> In other words, cooperation at the policy level is translated into workable plans of action at the operational level. A standard operating procedure, or at the very least norms regarding operation, must exist to instruct participants how certain activities are performed in reaction to a given situation.

#### Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is a much watered down version of Japan’s Ocean Peace Keeping (OPK) concept first introduced in 1999. While OPK proposed “coordinated activities among the regional maritime forces [under one international command] in order to maintain order in the utilization of the oceans, to prevent the occurrence of armed conflicts and to assure the stable and sustainable development of the oceans,”<sup>387</sup> ReCAAP only aims for joint exercises, information sharing, and capacity building. Limited in scope notwithstanding, it is the first multilateral government-to-government agreement to promote and

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<sup>386</sup> John F. Bradford, “The Growing Prospects for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia,” *Naval War College Reviews* 58, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 64.

<sup>387</sup> Susumu Takai and Kazumine Akimoto, *NIDS Security Reports: Ocean-Peace Keeping and New Roles for Maritime Force* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, March 2000), 62-63.

enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. The Agreement was finalized on November 11, 2004 and entered into force on September 4, 2006 with 17 signatories as of today.<sup>388</sup>

Central to the Agreement was the establishment of an Information Sharing Center (ISC) in Singapore on November 20, 2006. The Center was later recognized as an international organization on January 30, 2007. ISC as a coordinating hub has three broad functions.<sup>389</sup> First, it serves as a platform for information exchange linking the ReCAAP Focal Points (the designated government contact agency for ISC in each signatory state). An Information Network System (IFN) has been built at the cost of approximately US\$ 660,000 to facilitate communication and information exchange among the Focal Points as well as to the ISC to improve incident response speed and quality.<sup>390</sup> Second, it facilitates capacity building by regularly holding seminars and workshops for interested government agencies on combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in regional waters. Third, upon agreement among the contracting parties, the ISC may extend cooperation with organizations and like-minded parties on joint exercises, information sharing, capacity building, or other appropriate forms of

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<sup>388</sup> ReCAAP homepage, <http://www.recaap.org>. The seventeen Contracting Parties to ReCAAP are Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Denmark, India, Japan, South Korea, Lao, Myanmar, Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

<sup>389</sup> See ReCAAP Information Sharing Center homepage for detailed description, <http://www.recaap.org/AboutReCAAPISC.aspx>.

<sup>390</sup> “Adding Value, Charting Trend: ReCAAP Annual Research Report 2007,” ReCAAP ISC, Singapore, 2008, 13, accessed March 28, 2011, <http://www.recaap.org/AlertsReports/IncidentReports.aspx>.

cooperation. Moreover, as a research institute, it contributes to anti-piracy efforts by conducting analysis on incidents according to the level of violence involved and economic loss incurred. The monthly and annual reports provide up-to-date statistics of the piracy and armed robbery incidents in Asia. They also identify patterns of trends, and publish the outcomes of investigations reported by the Focal Points as well as highlight case studies and good practices undertaken by ship masters and their crews.<sup>391</sup> In reality, in order to find the least common denominator that would satisfy all signatories, the final version of ReCAAP excluded virtually any operational activity (especially those involving the armed forces) and largely confined the ISC's role to a platform for information gathering, voluntary exchange of information, and analysis at the end of a six-year protracted negotiation.<sup>392</sup>

Noticeably absent from the contracting parties are Malaysia and Indonesia. The idea of foreign naval or constabulary forces patrolling territorial waters has never been popular in Southeast Asia. Both countries fervently protested against the location of the ISC in Singapore and the possibility that the Center may publish politicized report unfavorable to other states.<sup>393</sup> Jakarta was especially displeased by fact that the location of ISC is a product of voting strongly pushed

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>392</sup> "Time to Close the Piracy Gap: The Fight Against Piracy is Seriously Hampered by the Non-participation of Malaysia and Indonesia," *The Business Times* (Singapore), Nov, 29, 2006.

<sup>393</sup> John Bradford, "Southeast Asian Maritime Security in the Age of Terror: Threats, Opportunity, and Charting the course Forward," *IDSS Working Paper 75* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, April 2005), 8-9.

by Japan and Singapore, rather than consensual decision making.<sup>394</sup> Indonesia was also unable to designate a “focal point” due to a jurisdictional fight among several concerned agencies such the navy and the Indonesian Marine Police.<sup>395</sup> In addition, Jakarta did not perceive much benefit from joining as the country has been preoccupied with land-based security concerns and piracy is low on its agenda.<sup>396</sup> Malaysia viewed the Center as an unnecessary and intentional competitor to the Piracy Reporting Center previously established in Kuala Lumpur and run by the London-based International Maritime Organization (IMO).<sup>397</sup> The fervent objection indeed reflects a long term intramural rivalry among the littoral states themselves. The absence of collaboration from Indonesia and Malaysia is a worrisome sign as the effectiveness of the ISC may be compromised. According to Ho, since the majority of the piracy incidents reported took place in waterways that are either partially or wholly within the territorial and archipelagic waters of the two littoral states, information from these

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<sup>394</sup> Yoichiro Sato, “Southeast Asian Receptiveness to Japanese Maritime Security Cooperation, Asia-Pacific,” *Center for Security Studies* (Honolulu), September 2007, 6, accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Maritime%20security%20cooperation%20Japan-SE%20Asia%20Sato.pdf>.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Sheldon Simon, “Safety and Security in the Malacca Straits: The Limits of Collaboration,” *Asian Security* 7, no. 1 (2011): 5.

<sup>397</sup> Anthony Bergin, “Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities,” (paper presented at the Fifth Japan-Australia Track 1.5 Dialogue, co-hosted by the Japan Institute of International Affairs and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Tokyo, July 23-24, 2009), 6; “Japan initiates anti-piracy meeting in Singapore,” *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, Nov. 27, 2006.



two countries would greatly contribute to a more accurate analysis on the situation in the regional waters.<sup>398</sup>

### Regional Maritime Security Initiative

The concept of the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) was first previewed by Admiral Thomas Fargo of US PACOM at the 2003 Shangri-la dialogue. A more definitive “plan of action” was later introduced by him in a Congressional testimony in March 2004. Broadly, RMSI is PACOM’s effort to operationalize the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Malacca Straits Initiative.<sup>399</sup> The end goal of RMSI is to bring together a “partnership of willing with varying capabilities and capacities to timely identify, monitor, and intercept transnational maritime threats under existing international and domestic laws... It is not a treaty or an alliance.”<sup>400</sup>

RMSI at operational level consists of five elements.<sup>401</sup> First, the initiative aims at increasing situational awareness and information sharing, or “cueing.” This is done by “leveraging technology to build and share a clear picture of the

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<sup>398</sup> Joshua Ho, “Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery in Asia,” *RSIS Commentaries*, June 23, 2008, 2.

<sup>399</sup> “Testimony of Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, United States Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Before the House Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives, Regarding U.S. Pacific Command Posture” U.S. Pacific Command, March 31, 2004.

<sup>400</sup> “Speech by Admiral Thomas Fargo, USN Commander, US Pacific Command, MILOPS, British Columbia,” US Pacific Command, May 3, 2004.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*

maritime environment to match that which we have of international airspace.”

Second, responsive decision making architectures are to be developed to achieve “speed of command”. Third, maritime interdiction “will take the form of law enforcement or customs vessels, but military forces may be needed for more organized threats, especially on the high sea.” Fourth, RMSI encourages the establishment of national coast guards and the integration of coast guard operations with naval forces to eliminate seams at sea. Lastly, since RMSI will be a “law enforcement” effort, enhanced interagency cooperation is required for immediate and synchronized responses.

However, RMSI was not well received by the ASEAN states especially after the media “misreported” the US intention to patrol the regional water by “putting Special Operational Forces on high speed vessels... to conduct effective interdiction”<sup>402</sup> and possibly setting up bases for that purpose. While Singapore and Australia were ready to participate and Thailand expressed conditional support for the initiative<sup>403</sup>, Indonesia and Malaysia strongly objected on the ground that “naval patrols by an extra-regional power are viewed as contrary to the innocent transit passage granted to ships using the Straits of Malacca since they were designated as international waterways under the United Nations

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<sup>402</sup> “Testimony of Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, United States Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Before the House Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives, Regarding U.S. Pacific Command Posture” U.S. Pacific Command, Q & A Session, March 31, 2004.

<sup>403</sup> Sumihiko Kawamura. 2008. “International Cooperation in Maritime Counter-Terrorism: The Japanese Perspective,” in *Maritime Counter-Terrorism: A Pan Asian Perspective*, ed. Swati Parashar (New Delhi, India: Dorling Kindersley, 2008), 162; “Bangkok Backs US Straits Initiative,” *The Nation*, June 25, 2004.

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).”<sup>404</sup> On top of infringement on sovereignty, “[t]he involvement of foreign troops will make us look weak. We don't want that,” said the Indonesian Vice-Admiral Argawa.<sup>405</sup> Accepting the US offer will further inflame the anti-American sentiment already visible in the region and subsequently reduce support for the two governments.

The coastal states were especially wary about the US and its allies magnifying and politicizing a “perceived” threat of terrorist attack to justify their strategic objectives in the region. Thus far, there has been no conclusive evidence to suggest that piracy or armed robbery against ships in the regional waters is conducted or sponsored by any of the terrorist groups active in the region. In addition RMSI was seen as a device to project a US forward military presence as well as to counter growing Chinese influence in the region.<sup>406</sup> ASEAN states have long expressed deep concerns over not being able to opt out of the strategic competition between these two extra regional-powers, and even worse, one day being forced to choose sides.<sup>407</sup> Despite Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld’s

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<sup>404</sup> Joshua Ho, “Operationalising the Regional Maritime Security Initiative,” *IDSS Commentaries* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, May 27, 2004).

<sup>405</sup> “Insights: Indonesia launches ‘Operation Octopus’ in Malacca Strait,” Singapore Institute of International Affairs, July 15, 2005, accessed April 23, 2011, <http://www.siiiaonline.org/?q=programmes/insights/indonesia-launches-operation-octopus-malacca-strait>.

<sup>406</sup> Christian-Marius Stryken, “The US Regional Maritime Security Initiative and US Grand Strategy in Southeast Asia,” in *Maritime Security in Southeast Asia*, eds. Kwa Chong Guan and John K. Skogan (New York: Routledge, 2007), 135.

<sup>407</sup> Liselotte Odgaard, “The South China Sea: ASEAN’s Security Concern About China,” *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 1 (2003): 11-24; James E. Auer and Robyn Lim, “The Maritime Basis of American Security in East Asia,” *Naval War College Review* LIV, no. 1 (2001): 35-58.

diplomatic effort to quickly reassure the littoral states that “[t]here is no intention, implication, or anything in anybody’s words that should imply or state bases or additional forces in the Straits of Malacca,”<sup>408</sup> the initiative was shelved by PACOM due to strong regional skepticism, and the concept withered away with no follow-up communication on the issue.

### The Malacca Strait Patrol

The Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP) evolved from the initial Trilateral Coordinated Patrols (code-named MALSINDO) between Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and was later reinforced by the establishment of the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEK) as well as the addition of Thai participation in the Eyes in the Sky (EiS) aerial surveillance. MALSINDO, formally launched on July 20, 2004 and later renamed the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), is a major improvement from three existing bilateral exercises that started in 1992: the MALINDO joint patrol between Malaysia and Indonesia, the INDOSIN joint naval exercise between Singapore and Indonesia, and the MARAPURA naval collaboration between Malaysia and Singapore. However, owing to the lack of training in joint exercises and perhaps sincerity, these bilateral joint patrols were so ineffective that one Indonesian naval officer lamented that “bilateral coordination of these patrols amounted to little more than exchanges of schedules,

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<sup>408</sup> “News Transcript: Secretary Rumsfeld Roundtable in Singapore,” U.S. Department of Defence, June 4, 2004, accessed January 16, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3330>.

to which in many cases partners did not adhere.”<sup>409</sup> Mindful of the fact that the quad-annual bilateral exercises were meager deterrents to pirates in the region, the consolidated MALSINDO is designed to be a 24-hour, year-round operation enforced by a consortium of seventeen naval ships from the three countries to tackle piracy, illegal transnational crimes, and possible terrorist attacks in the Malacca Strait.<sup>410</sup> At the same time, three naval command centers were set up in Batam (Indonesia), Changi (Singapore), and Lumut (Malaysia), to increase coordination through the use of a hot-line. Merchant ships are also allowed access to radio frequencies used by naval vessels for timely information and calls for help when under attack.<sup>411</sup>

The Eyes in the Sky (EiS) combined maritime air patrol was proposed by the then Malaysian Minister of Defence, Najib, during the 2005 Shangri-La Dialogue after strong US pressure for tighter security in the straits.<sup>412</sup> Under Phase I of the EiS, the armed forces of the participating countries would provide the resources of maritime patrol aircraft (mostly propeller planes with basic radar) and a combined mission patrol team onboard each flight. The flight schedule, up to two patrols a week along designated sectors, is then coordinated by the EiS

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<sup>409</sup> Bradford, “The Growing Prospects,” 66.

<sup>410</sup> “Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore Agree on Joint Malacca Straits Patrols,” *Channel News Asia*, June 20, 2004.

<sup>411</sup> Joshua Ho, “Threat Perception in Southeast Asia: Singapore’s Perspective,” in *Maritime Counter-Terrorism: A Pan-Asian Perspective*, ed. Swati Parashar (New Delhi, India: Dorling Kindersley, 2008), 103.

<sup>412</sup> “All can take part in patrols,” *The Sun Daily*, September 14, 2005.

operation center in each country, A Monitoring and Action Agency (MAA) was also set up in each state to establish a listening watch during all EiS flights and coordinate follow-on responses within their own territorial waters. Although not a littoral state, Thailand was invited by Indonesia to join the coordinated patrol in 2008 because of “rampant marine crimes particularly in the Thai marine territory north of the Malacca Strait.”<sup>413</sup> Although Indonesia and Malaysia had earlier rejected Singapore’s proposal of inviting the US to take part in the initiative<sup>414</sup>, it had been agreed that EiS should be an “open arrangement.”<sup>415</sup> There were discussions about extending EiS participation to the international community under Phase II, the United States included, as long as foreign participants are accompanied by littoral state representatives.<sup>416</sup> To date, Phase II has not been activated.

The arrangement also establishes the MSP Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG) formed by the three participating states in 2006 to support the sea and air patrols. The IEG is responsible for the development and implementation of an internet-based information platform called the Malacca Strait Patrols Information System, or MSP-IS. Specifically, “[t]he MSP-IS aggregates shipping databases

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<sup>413</sup> P.T. Bangsberg, “Indonesia, Thailand to Discuss Regional Maritime Security,” *Asia Pulse* (Jakarta), Jan. 3, 2011.

<sup>414</sup> “Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore Launch Coordinated Patrol of Malacca Strait,” *The Jakarta Post*, July 20, 2004.

<sup>415</sup> “Eye-in-The-Sky Over Malacca Straits From Sept 13,” *Bernama* (Kuala Lumpur), September 8, 2005.

<sup>416</sup> “All can take part in patrols.”

and relevant real-time maritime information to improve coordination and overall awareness of the situation at sea, to enable timely responses to maritime incidents in the Malacca Strait.”<sup>417</sup> It is worth noting that a conceptually related bilateral surveillance project, SURPIC, was launched under the ambit of INDOSIN joint patrol in May 2005 to enable the two navies to better monitor the waterway, exchange information, and deploy their patrol vessels to the affected areas.<sup>418</sup> While Project SURPIC has migrated to Phase II in December 2009 with enhanced software such as the Open and Analyzed Shipping Information System (OASIS) for maritime situational awareness and Sense-Making Analysis and Research Tool (SMART) for maritime sense-making, there is no plan to extend the project to include Malaysia or any other countries either inside or outside of the region<sup>419</sup>.

Although the MSP is widely lauded as the first indigenous multilateral ongoing security cooperation among the three armed forces, criticisms abound in every operational aspect of the initiative. First, to avoid the thorny issue of sovereignty especially in contested waters, the patrols are deliberately more coordinated than joint with each country patrolling its own sectors under national

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<sup>417</sup> “News Releases: Inaugural Malacca Strait Patrols Information Sharing Exercise,” Ministry of Defence, Singapore, March 28, 2008. Accessed April 26, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news\\_and\\_events/nr/2008/mar/28mar08\\_nr.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/news_and_events/nr/2008/mar/28mar08_nr.html).

<sup>418</sup> “News Releases: Closer bonds with Project SURPIC,” Ministry of Defence, Singapore, May 27, 2005, Accessed April 26, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/news/2005/may/27may05\\_news2.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/publications/cyberpioneer/news/2005/may/27may05_news2.html).

<sup>419</sup> “News Releases: Strengthening Surveillance Capability through Enhanced SURPIC.” Ministry of Defence, December 9, 2009, Accessed April 26, 2011. [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef\\_websites/atozlistings/navy/newsevents/Project\\_SURPIC\\_II.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/mindef_websites/atozlistings/navy/newsevents/Project_SURPIC_II.html).

command. Hot pursuit in this case is impossible as a patrol vessel from one country will not be allowed to interdict pirates, terrorists or other suspected maritime criminals into the territorial waters of another, leaving the offender(s) free to flee the scene. It was only after January 2006 that the littoral states finally agreed on cross-border hot pursuit up to five nautical miles into the sovereign waters of another strictly on the condition that no military action is allowed.<sup>420</sup> Similar constraints apply to the EiS operation as the air patrols may not go within three miles of other state's territorial coastlines when in pursuit of "suspected" vessels. Moreover, EiS currently only provides eight sorties a week and only during daylight, far from the seventy sorties required for 24/7 coverage. A multilateral agreement that does not allow reverse hot pursuit in its own territorial water is completely missing the point of "working together." These limitations led observers not only to question the effectiveness of coordinated patrols but also the long-term sustainability of the activities.<sup>421</sup>

Second, the timing of MALSINDO also leads to the question of efficacy. Although MALSINDO came into being partly due to a real need to address maritime predation that has been increasingly threatening local economies, the initiative was also a device to fend off foreign intervention. Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, though much less Singapore, have traditionally opposed any attempt at

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<sup>420</sup> It should be noted that under the 1992 INDOSIN arrangement, Indonesia and Singapore had reached an agreement on cross border hot pursuit in the Strait of Singapore but no similar agreement exists between Singapore and Malaysia.

<sup>421</sup> Ioannis Gatsiounis, "Pirates Mock Malacca Strait Security," *Asia Times*, April 8, 2005.



internationalizing the management of the sea lanes. The decision of the Joint War Committee (JWC) of the London-based Lloyds Market Association to designate the Strait of Malacca a “war risk area,” put unusually strong pressures on the littoral states to tackle the issue immediately. While Malaysia condemned Lloyds’ decision, Kuala Lumpur understood that the littoral states must coalesce “to paint the picture to the world that the strait is not really a war-risk zone” before the user states and stakeholders get involved.<sup>422</sup> The long perceived threat of US unilateral involvement in the straits actually served as the catalyst for closer cooperation among the littorals.<sup>423</sup> Furthermore, there has been no discussion on reviewing the effectiveness of the MSP initiative since the establishment of IEK, let alone plans to enhance it. It can be argued that MSP is essentially a Malaysia-Indonesia public relations campaign to the world that the littoral states are taking strait security seriously as well as keeping things under their control.<sup>424</sup>

### Cooperative Mechanism

The Cooperative Mechanism is a conceptual spinoff from the International Maritime Organization’s “Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes Initiative,” which “aimed to promote a comprehensive approach to addressing the safety, security,

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<sup>422</sup>Michael Schuman, “How to Defeat Pirates: Success in the Strait,” *Time*, Apr. 22, 2009.

<sup>423</sup> Ian Storey, “Securing Southeast Asian Sea Lanes: A Work in Progress,” *Asian Policy*, No. 6(July 2008): 96.

<sup>424</sup> J. N. Mak, “Unilateralism and Regionalism: Working Together and Alone,” in *Piracy, Maritime Terrorism and Securing the Malacca Straits*, eds. Graham Gerald Ong-Webb (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2006), 156.

and population control in critical shipping lanes around the world.”<sup>425</sup> Broadly, the Cooperative Mechanism is a burden sharing scheme among the coastal states, user states, and other stakeholders based on Article 43 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which stipulates that user states and states bordering a strait should by agreement cooperate to maintain and enhance navigational safety as well as to prevent, reduce and control pollution from ships.<sup>426</sup> According to the Honolulu-based Pacific Forum, approximately some US\$300 million is required to maintain aids to navigation in the straits over the next decade.<sup>427</sup> Thus far, no mandatory charges have been levied for transit due to violation of freedom of passage in international waters.<sup>428</sup> The heavy burden has led to an outcry from the littoral states that “international users have thus far not matched their extensive usage of the Straits and their keen interests in the Straits with proportionate contributions to the costs of maintaining the waterway.”<sup>429</sup> Starting from the IMO Jakarta meeting in 2005 and onwards, the three littoral states have been engaging all interested players for a workable plan

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<sup>425</sup> “New Milestone in Better Straits Cooperation: Article 43 of UNCLOS Helps Keep Malacca, Singapore Straits Safe, Secure, and Clean,” *The Business Times* (Singapore), September 28 2007.

<sup>426</sup> Users and stakeholders of the Straits include major shipping and trading nations, shipping and oil companies as well as maritime organizations.

<sup>427</sup> Mark. J. Valencia, “Burden Sharing in the Malacca and Singapore Straits: Sailing in the Right Direction,” *PacNet* 16 (March 29, 2007).

<sup>428</sup> Nihan Unlu, “Current Legal Developments: Straits of Malacca,” *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 21, no. 4 (2006): 543 and 547.

<sup>429</sup> Khalid Nazery, “Maritime Capacity-building Measures in the Straits of Malacca,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31, no. 3 (December 2009): 431.

to more equitably share the responsibilities of maintaining and enhancing navigational safety, and protection of marine environment in the straits.

The principles, scope, and organizational structure of the Cooperative Mechanism was finalized during the IMO Singapore meeting in 2007.<sup>430</sup> The terms and conditions reaffirm the sovereignty, jurisdiction and territorial integrity of the littoral States over the straits. In addition, any plan of action must be consistent with all pertinent international laws in general and article 43 of UNCLOS in particular. Although the primary responsibility for the safety of navigation and environmental protection in the straits lies with the littoral states, the interests of user states and other stakeholders are recognized. Operations are carried out within the framework of the Tripartite Technical Experts Group on the Safety of Navigation in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (TTEG), and participation by all parties should be voluntary.

The scope of the Cooperative Mechanism focuses on navigational safety and environmental protection in the Straits, but not security cooperation due to objections from Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>431</sup> The Cooperative Forum, the first component, serves to facilitate dialogue and exchange of views on issues related to the straits. However, participation in the forum is upon “invitation only” by the littoral states. On the flip side, because participation is on a voluntary basis, the

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<sup>430</sup> “The Co-operative Mechanism between the Littoral States and User States on Safety of Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore,” International Maritime Organization, IMO/SGP 2.1/1, August 16, 2007, accessed January 24, 2011, <http://www.mpa.gov.sg/sites/pdf/spore-mtg-co-op-mechan-070904.pdf>.

<sup>431</sup> Simon, “Safety and Security in the Malacca Straits,” 2.

littoral states may not compel unwilling users to join even with article 43 of UNCLOS as the legal basis. Second, a Project Co-ordination Committee (PCC) is set up to oversee the implementation of projects in cooperation with sponsoring users. The littoral states have identified six projects that are in need of sponsors: 1) wreck removal; 2) building capacity to respond to hazardous incidents; 3) a demonstration project for automatic identification system transponders on small ships; 4) setting up a tide, current and management system; 5) replacement and maintenance of navigational aids, and lastly 6) replacement of those damaged by the 2004 tsunami. The total estimated cost of all six projects amounts to US \$50 million.<sup>432</sup> Lastly, mindful of the fact that the Japanese maritime industry has indicated less funding in the future to maintain competitiveness<sup>433</sup>, a special fund for aid to navigation is established to ensure a sustainable means of funding. The hosting power of the Fund is shared by the littoral states with a three-year rotation. Malaysia is the current host. Contribution to the fund is voluntary.

The end result of a three-year long negotiation is a framework that is reasonably inclusive in membership with terms and conditions acceptable to all those who voluntarily participated. Yet, the prospect of the Cooperative Mechanism evolving into a more comprehensive scheme covering navigational safety, environmental protection, and security is not hopeful for two reasons.

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<sup>432</sup> “Malacca Strait users to help keep waterway safe and clean: Landmark development will lead to international cooperation in six projects costing \$50USm,” *The Straits Time*, September 5, 2007.

<sup>433</sup> Joshua Ho, “The Straits of Malacca Cooperative Mechanism,” *Ocean Development and International Law* 40 (2009): 239.

First, the coastal states have different opinions over the role the international community should play in the straits. In contrast to Singapore's open position and welcoming hand, Malaysia and Indonesia are more reluctant to allow the international community (state or non-state actors) to get involved.<sup>434</sup> In addition to creating precedence for foreign "interference" into domestic affairs, outside involvement and the accompanied media coverage may further expose the weakness of the littoral states in coping with security problems. Second, misgivings over attempts by extra-regional powers and major trading nations to control and manage various strategic maritime chokepoints further erode the willingness of Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta to include security cooperation. The resistance was so strong that in preparation for the second meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in 2006, Rear Admiral Stephen Voetsch had to openly assure the two countries that "the US has no desire, plan or intention to conduct patrols in the Strait of Malacca," and instead emphasized the need for user nations to contribute responsibly to the region's maritime security in coordination with the nations that hold jurisdiction.<sup>435</sup> Lastly, the plethora of security forums in the region such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting (ADMM), albeit not "action-oriented," have led to the exclusion of security cooperation by user states and stakeholders. In fact, the three littoral states share a tacit understanding that security matters fall under the purview of the MSP Joint

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<sup>434</sup> "Securing the Straits," *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), October 18, 2007.

<sup>435</sup> "Centre Chief: All users Should Help Maintain Strait," *New Strait Times*, September 18, 2006.

Coordinating Committee, even though the rationale for the IMO-littoral states meetings was primarily to address ship security issues in the straits.<sup>436</sup>

### Malaysia's Perspective

The following section examines how Malaysia's strategic culture might have influenced its evaluation on participating in multilateral maritime security regimes. Several recurrent themes on Malaysia's behavior can be gauged from the above survey. First, sovereignty is always the chief reason for Malaysia to reject a proposal on multilateral cooperation if the terms and conditions of the proposal are perceivably infringing territorial rights. Second, Malaysia is not only willing to clash with extra-regional powers, the United States in particular, but also with fellow ASEAN states. Third, political consideration always outweighs the perceived benefits from joining the multilateral initiatives. Lastly, Malaysia distinguishes maritime safety clearly from maritime security in its maritime strategy and is more inclined to cooperate in the realm of maritime safety. Kuala Lumpur is more inclined to cooperate in enhancing navigational safety, but not maritime security.

### *Suitability*

Suitability concerns with whether the proposed multilateral security cooperation initiatives will enhance Malaysia's economic wellbeing and strategic

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<sup>436</sup> Ho, "The Straits of Malacca Cooperative Mechanism," 239.

position in the region. In addition to being the major international maritime trade route, the coastal and marine renewable and non-renewable resources of the Malacca Strait are of immense value to Malaysia. The estimated gross economic value of the Strait exceeds US\$6.8 billion, not counting income from other activities such as coastal tourism, fisheries, exploitation of seabed petroleum and natural gas, port services, to name just a few.<sup>437</sup> However, the geophysical feature of the strait, namely a narrow archipelagic sea-lane, creates a natural navigational bottleneck that is easily blocked or congested due to natural disaster, accidental collision, piracy, or terrorist attack. The blockage of the chokepoint, even just temporarily, can incur tremendous economic loss to all littoral states, user states, shippers and other stakeholders. Although shippers may reroute via Lombok, Makassar, or Sunda Straits (smaller vessels only), the immediate extra cost associated with longer transit time in the scenario of a five day blockage in the Malacca Strait is estimated at USD 54 million<sup>438</sup>. The closing of the Suez Canal during the Suez Crisis in 1956 serves as a vivid reminder of how disruption in a major maritime trading route may increase freight rates by as much as 500 percent, if not more<sup>439</sup>. Accordingly, initiatives that improve navigational safety

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<sup>437</sup> Global Environment Facility (GEF), “GEF, WB, IMO: Development of Regional Marine Electronic Highway in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore,” *Draft Project Brief* (Washington, D.C.: GEF, October 2002).

<sup>438</sup> Heather Gilmartin, “EU-U.S.-China: Cooperation in the Malacca Straits,” *IFSH Working Paper* 151 (Hamburg, Germany, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, November 2008), 16.

<sup>439</sup> John H. Noer. “Southeast Asian Chokepoints: Keeping Sea Lines of Communication Open.” *Strategic Forum* 98 (December 1996): 2.

and security would not only ensure smooth transit but also sustain economic growth, prosperity and stability along the coastal areas.

In addition to enhanced navigational safety and security, joining multilateral cooperative security arrangements also resonates well with one of Malaysia's foreign policy objectives as identified in the latest edition of *Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*: to advance multilateral relations as a means to project Malaysia's values and defend its interests at the international level<sup>440</sup>. In effect, Malaysia is willing to support all initiatives aimed at strengthening... multilateralism."<sup>441</sup> This is also the goal of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), "to establish a conducive working environment that facilitates cooperation between the international maritime communities and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency."<sup>442</sup> Participating in any of the above mentioned multilateral arrangements will feature Malaysia as a responsible member of the global community and more importantly, a reliable partner in combating maritime predation. Moreover, visible actions in maritime law enforcement not only showcase Malaysia's resoluteness in upholding maritime safety and security, but also demonstrate the ability of the government to effectively administer its maritime zone. Foreign stakeholders thus may not use the lack of capacity on the part of Malaysia in anti-piracy and anti-terrorist

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<sup>440</sup> *Strategic Plan 2009-2015*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 23.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>442</sup> See MMEA homepage, <http://www.mmea.gov.my> for more information. It is the principal government agency tasked with maintaining law and order as well as coordinating search and rescue operations in the Malaysian Maritime Zone (MMZ) and on the high seas.



operations as a pretense to intervene. In the words of First Admiral Zulkifli bin Abu Bakar, the Northern Regional Commander of the Malaysian navy, “lack of enforcement portrays lack of display of authority and eventually, sovereignty.”<sup>443</sup>

### *Feasibility*

The feasibility assessment questions whether Malaysia can afford to reject proposals for multilateral arrangements for maritime safety and security. A cost/benefit analysis strictly from an economic standpoint would suggest that multilateral security cooperation with pooled resources in information sharing, capacity building, and the provision of equipment, technology, funding and training is deemed suitable for a developing nation such as Malaysia. The total estimated cost for the six navigational safety enhancement projects identified by the Project Co-ordination Committee of Cooperative Mechanism alone exceeds US\$ 50 million. Although the MMEA was operating on a US\$ 179 million budget in 2010, the funding was designated to cover operation, equipment, and personnel costs solely.<sup>444</sup> Improvement in maritime security and maritime safety is an obvious financial drain on Kuala Lumpur. The Malaysian prime minister openly said to the press that Malaysia alone “has spent more than RM200 million to

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<sup>443</sup> Zulkifli bin Abu Bakar, “Enhancing Maritime Security: Law Enforcement in Malaysia,” (paper presented at the 24<sup>th</sup> Asian-Pacific Roundtable: Strengthening Comprehensive and Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, June 8, 2010).

<sup>444</sup> “Security Agencies Aim To Further Improve Delivery System,” *Bernama*, Oct 23, 2009.

install, maintain, and upgrade various aids for navigation... For a small country with limited resources, this was a significant amount.”<sup>445</sup>

Given the rapid pace of technological change, reliance on indigenous development of maritime safety and security technology is insufficient. The lag in technological development also hinders interoperability between the armed forces of Malaysia and others. Due to budget constraints, successive white papers published by Malaysia’s Ministry of Defense readily admit to the lack of focus and funding on research and development (R&D). There has been little discussion on the need for indigenous research and development (R&D) in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and how such technology may help the armed forces develop better platforms for information exchange. Yet, Malaysia’s participation in various bilateral naval exercises with regional and extra-regional powers indicates Kuala Lumpur’s understanding of the utility of technology cooperation in maritime safety and security for enhanced surveillance and networked information exchange to keep any disruption of the free flow of trade and navigation in the straits to a minimum. In the June 2004 Shangri-la Dialogue, then Defence Minister Najib even conceded that Southeast Asia “should definitely expand our cooperation with the US” with regard to acquisition of intelligence and surveillance technology.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> “Malaysia Spends over 200m Ringgit to Ensure Malacca Strait Security,” *Bernama*, October, 21, 2008.

<sup>446</sup> The International Institute for Security Studies, “Piracy and Terror in Southeast Asia: Dire Straits,” *IISS Strategic Comments* 10, no. 6 (July 2004): 2.

Malaysia has thus far downplayed the possibility of terrorists causing mayhem in the strait, calling the foreign conflation of piracy with terrorist attack over exaggerated. Given the steady decline in the number of maritime predation reported by various agencies, “[t]he notion of a possible nexus between sea pirates and potential maritime terrorists advocated by some self-proclaimed maritime strategists and government officials.”<sup>447</sup> has not only created a gloomy scenario in this region but also the unfair accusation of the littoral states not doing enough to secure the straits. Of those reported, most piracy incidents actually occurred in Indonesia’s archipelagic waters where the configuration of the coastlines in combination with sporadic enforcement made the area prone to maritime crimes. In the view of Kuala Lumpur, it is Indonesia that is the “weakest link” in safeguarding maritime security, not Malaysia.

Unlike Singapore and other concerned extra regional powers, Malaysia has clearly securitized Malacca Strait dichotomously by distinguishing maritime security from navigational safety. While the former deals with “those measures employed by owners, operators and administrators of vessels, port facilities, offshore installations, and other marine organizations or establishments to protect against seizure, sabotage, piracy, pilferage, annoyance or surprise,” the latter focuses on those measures employed by the littoral states, user states and stakeholders “to prevent or minimize the occurrence of mishaps or incidents at sea

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<sup>447</sup> Iskandar Sazlan. “Threat Perception in Southeast Asia: Malaysia’s Perspective,” in *Maritime Counter-Terrorism: A Pan Asian Perspective*, edited by Swati Parashar (New Delhi, India: Dorling Kindersley), 107.

that may be caused by the substandard ships, unqualified crew or operator error.”<sup>448</sup> As seen in the cases of the ReCAAP and Cooperative Mechanism, Malaysia has elected only to participate in collaborative effort to enhance maritime safety, not maritime security. The effectiveness, efficacy, and long-term sustainability of the Malacca Strait Patrol have yet to be tested. Moreover, MSP is more geared toward anti-piracy rather than anti-terror in the straits. Experts point to an obvious problem that a gap in information chains may exist if piracy and terrorism are not tackled together.<sup>449</sup> Despite Malaysia’s reluctance to acknowledge the possibility of piracy being exploited by terrorist groups to bring about larger scale catastrophes, confirmed and unconfirmed leads for terrorist attacks in the straits have never ceased to occupy headlines. The latest warning from the Singaporean Navy that a terrorist group is planning attacks on oil tankers in the Malacca Strait should be a good motivation for Kuala Lumpur to rethink its maritime strategy.<sup>450</sup>

Lastly, the strategic balance in the region may be altered especially when foreign resources have been continuously funneled to other willing recipients in the region in the name of maritime security. The most noteworthy donation of late is the US grant to Indonesia for two squadrons of F-16A/B Fighting Falcons with

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<sup>448</sup> M. Q. Mejia Jr., “Defining Maritime Violence and Maritime Security,” in *Maritime Violence and Other Security Issues at Sea: Proceedings of the Symposium on Maritime Violence and Other Security Issues at Sea*, eds. P.K. Mukherjee, M.Q. Mejia Jr., and G.M. Gauci (Malmo, Sweden: World Maritime University 2002), 27-38.

<sup>449</sup> Yun Yun Teo. “Target Malacca Straits: Maritime Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 6 (2007): 541-561.

<sup>450</sup> “Security Raised in Malacca Strait after Terror Warning,” *Reuters*, March 4, 2011.

upgraded avionic systems as part of its overall program to upgrade the Indonesia air force.<sup>451</sup> In fiscal 2010, the US has also provided US\$80 million to Indonesia under the Global Train and Equip Program for improved maritime security and counter-terror capability, an amount twice as much as provided to Malaysia.<sup>452</sup> Under the Strategic Partnership in Defense and Security, Singapore has received US assistance not only in first hand intelligence but also resources for capacity building in anti-terrorism, anti-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), joint military exercises and training, direct policy dialogues, and defense technology transfer.<sup>453</sup> Malaysia's preference to stay self-reliant when it comes to defense and security related matters renders it a difficult partner to work with.

### *Acceptability*

The suitability assessment indicates that the perceived benefits from joining the multilateral initiatives will enhance Malaysia's strategic position. Participating in multilateral initiatives also complement Malaysia's foreign policy goals and showcases its image as a responsible and cooperative member of the international community. The feasibility evaluation suggests that Malaysia clearly stands to lose in the long run if it continuously rejects working collaboratively

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<sup>451</sup> "Indonesia Accepts US Offer of 24 F-16 Fighter Jets," *Antara*, February 15, 2011.

<sup>452</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Security Assistance Reform: 'Section 1206' Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 3, 2011), 7.

<sup>453</sup> Mushahid Ali, "Singapore's Balancing Diplomacy: Defense Cooperation with USA, India," *IDSS Commentaries* (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, November 12, 2003), 1.

with all concerned stakeholders. What are the reasons behind Kuala Lumpur's meager support for, if not total rejection of, proposals for multilateral security cooperation, especially those involving the armed forces?

First, the scope and extent of any cooperation, bilateral or multilateral, are necessarily limited by Malaysia's insistence on upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbors. The heightened sensitivity over sovereignty is understandable as memories of colonization and hard fought independence linger. It was the very same excuse of eradicating piracy that was used by the colonial powers to conquer and colonize the littoral states.<sup>454</sup> Any uninvited foreign involvement and military presence (naval patrols and training flights included) in the names of anti-piracy and counter-terrorism in regional waters are deemed gross violations of the sovereign rights of the littoral states. Malaysia's position on any outside involvement or interference, whether in security or law enforcement in the straits is clear, that is, "we do not condone such actions," said the Minister of Foreign Affairs.<sup>455</sup> Allowing extra-regional involvement in any of the enforcement regimes in the strait will only create unwelcome precedents that may further erode control by the coastal states.

Second, maritime sovereignty remains a touchy subject because both Malaysia and Indonesia believe that "they have failed to achieve complete

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<sup>454</sup> Sazlan, "Threat Perception in Southeast Asia," 119.

<sup>455</sup> "Malaysia Spends over 200m Ringgit to Ensure Malacca Strait Security," *Bernama*, October, 21, 2008.

sovereignty in the Malacca strait.”<sup>456</sup> The strait, along with the Singapore Strait, have been declared passages for international navigation even though the thoroughfares fall squarely within the internal water of the littoral states. In particular, the “transit passage” regime spawned by the 1982 UNCLOS disallows the states bordering an “international” strait from unilaterally impeding the freedom of navigation in the waterway. The Malaysian insistence on the application “innocent passage” to all ships traversing the strait was met with a strong US objection (backed by other maritime powers). Washington argued that since the Malacca Strait is used for international navigation “the right to transit passage cannot be suspended for security reasons even temporarily.”<sup>457</sup> Seeing how sovereignty may be encroached by foreign manipulation of international laws, the goal for Malaysia is therefore to limit further erosion of sovereignty by any other means. Although foreign military vessel and aircraft may exercise the rights of freedom of navigation and over-flight solely for the purpose of continuous and expeditious transit, they are prohibited from taking military and non-military postures (patrol and training) without the consent of the littoral states. The battle between the concepts of “innocent passage” and “transit passage” is just another example of how the “strong do what they can, and the

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<sup>456</sup> Mak, “Unilateralism and Regionalism,” 136.

<sup>457</sup> Kheng-Liang Ko, *Straits in International Navigation: Contemporary Issues* (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1982), 35. The 1958 UN Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone stipulates that passage is innocent as long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order, or security of the coastal states. The 1982 UNCLOS holds that transit passage cannot be impeded by the state bordering a strait used for international navigation as long as the transit is continuous and expeditious.

weak suffer what they must". The loss of complete sovereign control over the strait further convinces Malaysia that the world is not fair and just and Malaysia must fight for itself.

Third, not only is Malaysia willing to collide with extra-regional powers on the issue of sovereignty, Kuala Lumpur is also unyielding on territorial disputes with its neighbors. Despite Malaysia's reiteration that unresolved territorial disputes will not impair ongoing joint efforts to monitor the shared waterways, clashes over sovereignty have been brought up from time to time. Although Malaysia often shares Indonesia's concerns over how new safety or security regime may negatively affect their sovereign control over the straits, the two countries do not act together. While the littoral states continue to work together and negotiate their ways in all the above mentioned initiatives, border skirmishes have never ceased. The Indonesian navy openly accused the Malaysian navy and Marine Police of intruding into Indonesian waters at least nine times in the early half of 2009 alone.<sup>458</sup> The latest incident of Indonesia refusing to release two Malaysian vessels allegedly fishing illegally in the Indonesian EEZ on April 7 this year highlights the growing tensions in the disputed resource rich waters surrounding Ambalat. The root cause of continuous clashes can be attributed to the inability to demarcate an agreed upon EEZ boundary. While Malaysia is not an archipelagic state, it nonetheless followed Indonesia in 1969 to delineate its border by claiming straight baselines drawn between the outermost limits of

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<sup>458</sup> "Navy Was Set To Fire on Warship," *Jakarta Globe*, June 4, 2009.



Malaysian territory. This unilateral act, said the Prime Minister, was to ensure “an equitable basis for negotiations on maritime resources with Indonesia.”<sup>459</sup>

Malaysia is also displeased by the repeated accusations from foreign powers that its government lacks the capacity and a comprehensive strategy to deal with transnational maritime threats. The Sipadan kidnapping incident is often cited by foreign observers as an example of Malaysia’s vulnerability and the lack of overall preparedness to transnational crimes.<sup>460</sup> In order to refute the image of a weak state that is incapable of protecting the safety of its citizen on Malaysian soil, the defence minister quickly deployed troops to all resort islands along Sabah’s east coast and warned that kidnapping from within Malaysian territories would be considered a violation of sovereignty.<sup>461</sup> Malaysia prides itself as the leader of the third world, a leader that is not only capable of safeguarding the interests of the state but also able to speak up “on issues that other developing countries [and the Islamic world in particular] feel constrained to voice for fear of retribution by the major, particularly western powers.”<sup>462</sup> The idea of a small state susceptible to foreign intrusion by both state and non-state actors runs counter to

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<sup>459</sup> Michael Leifer. *International Traits of the World: Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia* (Alphen aan den Rijn, the Netherlands: Sijthoff and Noordhoff, 1978), 30. The concept of straight baselines allegedly extends Indonesian territory by 250 percent, from roughly 2 million square kilometers to more than 5 million.

<sup>460</sup> In April and September 2000, the Abu Sayyaf group from the Philippines attacked the Malaysian resort islands of Sipadan and Pandanan, off the east coast of Sabah, kidnapping 24 dive tourists.

<sup>461</sup> “Troops on Isles. Najib: Soldiers to be Deployed on All Islands Along Sabah’s East Coast,” *The Star*, September 15, 2000.

<sup>462</sup> “Malaysia’s Foreign Policy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, accessed April 4, 2011, [http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/foreign\\_policy](http://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/foreign_policy).

the self portrayal of “Third World Spokesmanship.” Malaysia is also careful not to openly endorse US-led counter-terrorism discourse that can be perceived by the Islamic community in general and domestic constituencies in particular as anti-Islamic. At most, Malaysia will cooperate with other countries in navigational safety in the strait, but “we do not need outside protection,” said the foreign minister.<sup>463</sup> If anything, Malaysia’s Third World Spokesmanship necessarily creates points of difference, if not frictions, between Malaysia and several western powers. Its stance on “indigenous solutions” may also limit the scope and extent of cooperation, if not inadvertently prevent a cooperative security regime from taking place.

#### Singapore’s Perspective

Several recurrent themes can be identified from Singapore’s behavior from the above survey. First, Singapore devises its maritime security strategy based on worst case scenarios that others might find implausible. Second, unlike Malaysia, Singapore did not object to any of the proposals based on the fear of losing sovereign control of its internal water. Third, Singapore welcomes cooperative regimes both in maritime security and navigational safety. Fourth, Singapore prefers the involvement of at least one extra-regional power in any of the multilateral security or safety regimes. Lastly, Singapore often sides with the extra-regional powers on the region’s security needs and consequently holds

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<sup>463</sup> “No Need on Foreign Help on Straits,” *The Sun Daily* (Selangor, Malaysia), February 25, 2005

opposing views against the two other littoral states on how the straits should be best managed.

### *Suitability*

The suitability test assesses whether Singapore's decision to promote and join a "action-oriented" multilateral cooperative security regime in the regional waters will boost its overall economic wellbeing and strategic position in the region. Singapore occupies a unique position in Southeast Asia as it is the only "developed" state in the region with the value of external trade substantially higher than its GDP. Seaborne trade has been the most important lifeline for the economic wellbeing of the island. Despite Singapore's progress in the last few decades, the challenge to the city-state remains the same as the late Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (Singapore's first Minister of Foreign Affairs) once opined: "our problem is how to make sure that a small island with a teeming population and no natural resources to speak of, can maintain, even increase, its living standards and also enjoy peace and security in a region marked by mutual jealousies, internal violence, economic disintegration and great power conflicts."<sup>464</sup> Any security measure that will ensure a stable environment for continued growth, whether initiated by extra-regional powers or a product of negotiated regional effort, is thus greatly welcomed.

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<sup>464</sup> S. Rajaratnam, "Survival", 211.

In addition, cooperating with regional and extra-regional powers without alliance commitment also fits well with Singapore's foreign policy and security goals. One important mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is making friends through "being a responsible and constructive member of the international community, including sharing Singapore's developmental experience with other countries."<sup>465</sup> Promoting and joining multilateral regimes that offer absolute gains to all participants is certainly a practical way to boost Singapore's image as a dependable partner. Nevertheless, multilateral security regimes, especially non-binding ones with voluntary participation, better serves Singapore's security posture defined by self-reliance and neutrality. Being the only Chinese-majority society with developed economic status and cutting edge military forces in a Muslim-dominated region, Singapore is a convenient political punching bag if its agenda runs counter to that of other ASEAN states. For this reason, Singapore prefers to stay within the existing regional security architecture which is best characterized by "a loose overlapping pattern of partnerships formed around functional areas of interest, with varying memberships and varying agendas."<sup>466</sup> Although Singapore has identified with the United States on the need to improve regional security, it has purposely eschewed alliance commitment and opted for being a "major security cooperation partner of the US." It is a term "that captures

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<sup>465</sup> "Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Mission," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, accessed on February 20, 2011, [http://app.mfa.gov.sg/2006/idx\\_abtmfa.asp?web\\_id=1#vision](http://app.mfa.gov.sg/2006/idx_abtmfa.asp?web_id=1#vision).

<sup>466</sup> Teo Chee Hean, "Security Cooperation in Asia: Managing Alliances and Partnerships," *Pointer* 33, no. 2 (2007), accessed March 3, 2011, [http://www.mindef.gov.sg/iminddef/publications/pointer/journals/2007/v33n2/Security\\_Cooperation\\_in\\_Asia\\_Managing\\_Alliances\\_and\\_Partnerships.html](http://www.mindef.gov.sg/iminddef/publications/pointer/journals/2007/v33n2/Security_Cooperation_in_Asia_Managing_Alliances_and_Partnerships.html).

the relationship as being more than just friends,” emphasized by the defence minister, “but not really treaty allies.”<sup>467</sup>

### *Feasibility*

Since Singapore endorses multilateral cooperative security regimes in the Malacca Strait, the feasibility test evaluates whether Singapore can achieve its maritime security goals on its own without help from others, especially from Malaysia and Indonesia. As a transshipment hub for seaborne trade and oil refinement, any disruption in the straits of Malacca and Singapore would devastate the island’s economy and security. In the case of the Malacca strait, a multilateral security arrangement is by default a necessity for one obvious reason: Singapore does not have jurisdiction over that particular waterway. Effective monitoring of the strait automatically involves at the very least Malaysia and Indonesia, if not other interested parties. Under UNCLOS, the Singapore navy and coast guard, though better trained and equipped, may not unilaterally, monitor, patrol, or apprehend vessels suspected of maritime crimes in Malaysian and Indonesian waters even if the strait is declared a waterway for international navigation.

Moreover, even with the most expedient mobilization mechanism, Singapore is still faced with minimum reaction time due to the lack of strategic depth should the city-state suffer a massive security breach. The government has

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

implemented organizational changes through the “networking approach” not only in the three services of the Armed Forces but also within the entire government apparatus to better prevent, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks. However, these changes are originally intended to enhance the ability of the state to respond to a terrorist attack through timely communication. In comparison to post-attack management, prevention is deemed the more effective way to minimize economic loss and casualties. “When you're dealing with terrorists, it takes a long time. It requires intelligence networks to co-operate with one another, to know who they are and then you have just got to arrest them to prevent a bomb from going off. You can't work like the police – let the bomb go off first and then you catch them and put them on trial ...” explained Goh Chok Tong, the former Prime Minister.<sup>468</sup> Given that terrorist groups active in the region may paralyze traffic in the strait simply by announcing a pending attack, cooperation with other states, extra-regional or regional, in the forms of timely information exchange and speedy interdiction is imperative for effective prevention.

Furthermore, Singapore shares with the US the nightmare of a supertanker being hijacked and driven into the Singapore port, being used as a floating dirty bomb, or sunk in the Malacca Straits. The worst case scenario mentality has convinced Singapore to securitize the two straits by fusing maritime security and navigational safety together. While Malaysia and Indonesia refuse to acknowledge the nexus between piracy and terrorism, Singapore holds the view

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<sup>468</sup> “Interview with Goh Chok Tong: HARD Talk”, *British Broadcasting Corporation*, September 23, 2003.

that criminal acts of piracy are indistinguishable from potential acts of terrorism and therefore the two should be treated the same in security regimes.<sup>469</sup> Singapore's heightened threat perception and its campaign on "real and imminent" terrorist attack have brought much discomfort to the other two littoral states. The move to invite multilateral military involvement in the straits suggests the other two littoral states lack both vigilance and capacity to deal with transnational maritime crimes. Singapore's insistence on inviting the United States and Japan for joint patrols also fueled suspicion over Singapore's hidden strategic agenda and the western powers' hegemonic goals. In return, Malaysia's foreign minister sternly warned Singapore not to "unilaterally invite the United States to patrol the Straits,"<sup>470</sup> and reassured all concerned stakeholders that his country "should be able to be in a position in which there will be no more incidents of piracy in the Straits of Malacca..."<sup>471</sup>

### *Acceptability*

The suitability test shows multilateral security regimes do enhance Singapore's economic well-being and strategic position in the region. The feasibility test suggests that Singapore cannot fulfill its maritime security goals in the straits without help especially from Malaysian and Indonesia. The city-state in

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<sup>469</sup> Mak, "Unilateralism and Regionalism," 151.

<sup>470</sup> "S'pore Can't Invite US to Patrol Straits: KL," *The Strait Times*, May 12, 2004.

<sup>471</sup> P.T. Bangsberg, "Malaysia Rejects U.S. Patrols for Malacca Strait," *Pacific Shipper* 90 (June 9, 2004).

most parts has worked closely with the other two littoral states for strengthened maritime safety and security. The three have hammered out the tripartite Malacca Strait Sea Patrol in 2004 with the later additions of the Eyes in the Sky aerial surveillance and the Intelligence Exchange Group. Although the effectiveness of the coordinated patrols has yet to be proven, the whole Malacca Strait Patrol package represents the first regional, ongoing multilateral effort that involves the three armed forces. Against the backdrop of the existence of an indigenous security arrangement, Singapore has persistently called for military assistance from extra-regional powers for joint patrols in the straits, other than the usual pleas for intelligence, technology, funding, and equipment. Singapore's move is quite uncommon as it runs counter to the practices of unobtrusive engagement and consultative decision making that typify the ASEAN Way. Knowing the two other littoral states will most definitely object to Singapore's invitation for foreign military forces monitoring the regional waters, why has Singapore not given up on this idea?

Singapore has justified its decision to involve extra-regional military forces by arguing that the eradication of transnational maritime crimes naturally dictates transnational enforcement effort: "It is not realistic to unilaterally confine such patrols only to countries in this part of the world. . . . [W]e can do more if we galvanize the resources of extra-regional players."<sup>472</sup> Other than the added benefit of pooled resources, the extra-regional involvement may tip the internal balance

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<sup>472</sup> "Singapore Seeks Joint Patrols of Malacca Straits, Involving Japan," *BBC Monitoring International Reports: Asia Africa Intelligence Wire*, May 20, 2004.



within the tripartite circle in favor of the Singapore. While Malaysia and Indonesia are more interested in upholding sovereignty and economically exploiting ocean resources, Singapore's interests in trade and strategic positioning overlaps those of maritime powers (or the user states). The survey of the four attempts at creating multilateral security regimes in the straits shows how Singapore has to compromise on its demands, however unwillingly, for any of the initiatives to be pushed through. While Malaysia and Indonesia can sometimes act in unison irrespective of their points of difference, Singapore is left outside of the circle.

In the view of Singapore, the U.S. military presence in the region underpinned by various bilateral treaties helps maintain stability in the region. Yet, rising Chinese naval power challenges US influence in the region. Amidst the strategic competition between the major and rising powers, Singapore is careful not to be forced to take sides and at the same time tries to remain relevant. As a small state, the best way to do so would be "to invite them all on a limited scale, so that the external powers would balance among themselves,"<sup>473</sup> while Singapore remains the key access point for them to the neighborhood.

Yet, Singapore's close identification with extra-regional interests by no means suggests the city state would blindly accommodate foreign demands. For example, a huge disagreement exists between Singapore and Washington over how best to control potential terrorist finances. Although Singapore has a

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<sup>473</sup> "Malacca Straits Security Reflects Hazy Dividing Line," *Asia Times*, June 14, 2004.

Monetary Authority to help banking and financial institutions recognize terrorist transactions, it retains several financial secrecy laws to boost its standing as the regional entrepot.<sup>474</sup> Consequently, foreign currency exchanges are not required to be reported, and Singapore does not share financial records with the United States.

## Conclusion

This chapter reveals that underneath the veil of cooperation there exists strong intramural rivalry between the three littoral states. The root of conflict stems from how each coastal state defines and pursues its maritime security strategy. On the one hand, Malaysia is determined to prevent further erosion of its sovereignty even at the expense of forestalling cooperative security mechanisms that may enhance the economic well being and strategic position of the state. Malaysia's insistence on distinguishing maritime security from navigational safety necessarily limits the extent and scope of cooperation. Suspensions over Singapore's collusion with extra regional powers to internationalize the management of the straits further compound the existing security predicament.

On the other hand, Singapore often sides with the extra-regional powers on the region's security needs and consequently holds opposing views against two other littoral states on how the straits should be best managed. Singapore devises its maritime security strategy based on worst case scenarios that others might find

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<sup>474</sup> Anthony Smith, *Special Assessment: Singapore and the United States 2004-2005: Steadfast Friends* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, February 2005), 5.

exaggerated. The heightened threat perception ordains how the straits are securitized. Maritime security and navigational safety are fused together because it is difficult to make the distinction between piracy and terrorism as the latter may launch attacks in the guise of the former. Other than securing extra backing against the other two littoral states, Singapore chooses to involve at least one extra-regional power in any of the multilateral security or safety regimes based on well calculated strategic considerations. The MSP is the only multilateral security regime without extra-regional involvement, though it was clearly against Singapore's wish.

While observers are optimistic about how genuine cooperative security may germinate from the various multilateral security arrangements regarding the straits, these are at best abridged multilateralism. Relative gains trump absolute gains in all the proceedings. This trend, in the long run, stifles the positive spillover effect genuine cooperation may bring about between countries. There is no actual effort to bring the plethora of security arrangements and forums, many overlapping and non-action oriented, under one umbrella cooperative security scheme. Although the principle of sovereignty is sacrosanct, the representatives of the three littoral states should make a note that their sovereignty and jurisdiction in the straits are not absolute in the face of transnational maritime crimes.

## Chapter 7

### THAI-CAMBODIA BORDER CONFLICT: OUTSIDER NOT WELCOME

#### Introduction

On the top of the serene Dangrek mountain there sits the elegant ancient ruin, the temple of Preah Vihear (or Prasat Phra Wiharn in Thai). Built during the reigns of two Khmer Kings, Suryavarman I (1002-1050) and Suryavarman II (1113-1150), the temple was the kings' dedication to the Hindu god, Shiva the destroyer. Preah Vihear is considered the most distinguished example of ancient Khmer architecture other than the temple complex of Angkor Wat. The modern history of the temple is however much contested as both post-independent Cambodia and Thailand lay claim to the temple. The 1962 decision by the International Court of Justice to award ownership of the temple to Cambodia marks the beginning of a five decade long dispute that has escalated into militarized conflict in the past two years.

This chapter traces the latest round of the Thai-Cambodia border conflict as the event unfolds since mid-2008. The Thai insistence on solving the conflict bilaterally is in stark contrast to the Cambodian effort at internationalizing the issue. Bangkok is determined to forestall any outside involvement, if not intervention, in the conflict. In particular, Thailand has categorically rejected ASEAN assistance in facilitating dialogue with Cambodia. The analysis below unveils Thailand's reasoning for sticking with the hitherto unsuccessful approach

at the expense of prolonged militarized confrontation and mounting casualties. On the whole, multilateralism is far from the norm in Thailand's strategic calculation. Cooperation is difficult to come by when it comes to sovereignty and territorial integrity.

#### The Original Dispute: Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand)

The dispute originated in a boundary settlement treaty between Cambodia's colonial ruler, France, and Siam, as Thailand was then known, in 1907.<sup>475</sup> Prior to the signing of the treaty, a Franco-Siamese Mixed Commission was set up in 1904 with French topographic experts to demarcate the border between the two countries by the watershed line of the Dangrek mountain range. According to the treaty (and the watershed line agreement), the Preah Vihear Temple should fall within the Thai side of the mountain and the temple is most accessible from the Thai side as well. A map published subsequently by the French colonial government under the auspice of the commission however placed the temple in Cambodia. For reasons unknown, Thailand had not objected to the map at the time of its publication. Yet, from time to time after Cambodia's independence Bangkok would remind Phnom Penh of Thai sovereignty over the temple and the surrounding land of 4.6 square kilometers by stationing troops there. To demand Thai withdrawal and clarify the ownership of the temple once

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<sup>475</sup> "Convention Between France and Siam Modifying the Stipulations of the Treaty of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1893, Regarding Territorial Boundaries and Other Arrangement." The treaty was signed by both parties in Paris on February 13, 1903. Ratification exchanged in Paris on December 9, 1904.

and for all, Cambodia filed an application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1959 for adjudication.

During the ICJ proceedings, Thailand objected to the Cambodian application on three grounds.<sup>476</sup> First, the 1907 treaty should take precedence over an erroneous map, which was, in Thailand's opinion, intentionally produced by the French colonial government not only to mislead the other parties but also to further its imperialist ambition. Second, Thailand argued that the Court has no jurisdiction to entertain the case. Thailand had never, implicitly or explicitly, accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. Neither Thailand nor Cambodia has ever been a party to the 1928 General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes. This Act enumerated a framework for inter-state disputes, including the establishment of a conciliatory commission, an arbitration tribunal, and the opportunity to present cases before the ICJ should the previous mechanisms fail to solve the dispute. Specifically, by signing the Act, states agree to give up some of their sovereignty and submit themselves to the jurisdiction of the ICJ. The ruling is "binding, final, and without appeal" provided that any of the disputing parties may ask the court for clarification if there is a difference in interpretation on the meaning or scope of the court's

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<sup>476</sup> "Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand): Preliminary Objections of the Government of Thailand, May 23, 1960," International Court of Justice, accessed May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/45/9259.pdf>.

judgment.<sup>477</sup> Third, post-independence Cambodia did not succeed any treaty rights of France and ergo not was a contracting party to the Act.

Eloquent objections notwithstanding, the court ruled, by nine votes to three, in favor of Cambodia and awarded the temple and its vicinity to Phnom Penh in 1962. The majority opinion applied the principle of legitimate expectation from qualified acquiescence, *qui tacet consentire videtur si loqui debuisset ac potuisset* [He who keeps silent is held to consent if he must and can speak].<sup>478</sup> In particular, the consenting judges reasoned that “the Siamese authorities by their conduct acknowledged the receipt, and recognized the character, of these maps, and what they purported to represent, is shown by the action of the Minister of the Interior [of Siam], Prince Damrong, in thanking the French Minister in Bangkok for the maps, and in asking him for another fifteen copies of each of them for transmission to the Siamese provincial Governors.”<sup>479</sup> In other words, Thailand had not once raised issues related to the validity of map and the subsequent usage of the map by Thai officials satisfactorily constituted the act of qualified acquiescence to Cambodian sovereignty over the temple.

Thailand reacted negatively to the 1962 ICJ ruling. The Foreign Minister depicted the ruling as a “miscarriage of justice” when speaking to a group of

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<sup>477</sup> “Statute of the International Court of Justice, Article 60,” International Court of Justice, accessed May 4, 2011, [http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0#CHAPTER\\_III](http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0#CHAPTER_III).

<sup>478</sup> “Case Concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand): Merits, June 15, 1962” International Court of Justice, 23, accessed May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/45/4871.pdf>.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 24.

outraged protesters in Bangkok.<sup>480</sup> Although Thailand tacitly agreed to the Cambodian ownership of the temple, Bangkok insisted that the ruling did not cover the surrounding lands. The disputed area should only be settled via bilateral negotiations at a later time. Yet, attention to the temple quickly faded as both countries were engulfed by a host of international and domestic security problems, especially the looming cold war complicated by the US involvement in Vietnam, and the threat of communism at home. No demarcation talks were held since.

#### The UN World Heritage Designation

The dispute over Preah Vihear has remained dormant for the past four decades until Cambodia brought the issue back to the spotlight in 2008 by expressing its intention to have the temple inscribed a World Heritage site. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) awards the World Heritage designation to sites of outstanding cultural, natural, or physical value to the common heritage of mankind as a whole. “What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application. World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located.”<sup>481</sup> The World Heritage is thus about preserving civilization, not politics.

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<sup>480</sup> *Thailand Post*, June 18, 1962.

<sup>481</sup> “About World Heritage,” United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), accessed May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>.



At first, the Surayud government of Thailand conditionally endorsed the Cambodian application provided that the application only covers the temple complex itself, not the disputed surrounding lands. A Joint Communiqué was concluded by Foreign Minister Noppadon with his Cambodian counterpart, Sok An, in the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on May 22, 2008 to reaffirm Thai support for the inscription. Although Bangkok has never formally recognized the ICJ ruling, the Thai endorsement of the Cambodian application, albeit conditional, does in a way acknowledge Phnom Penh's sovereign claim over Preah Vihear. According to the nomination rules, only "state-parties" that have signed the World Heritage Convention and pledged to protect their natural and cultural heritage can submit nomination proposals for properties on their territory to be considered for inscription in UNESCO's World Heritage List.<sup>482</sup> It is thus within the sovereign right of Cambodia to nominate the temple a World Heritage Site. Yet, the Convention also stipulates that "[t]he inclusion of a property situated in a territory, sovereignty or jurisdiction over which is claimed by more than one State, shall in no way prejudice the rights of the parties to the dispute."<sup>483</sup> This particular clause becomes the legal basis for Thailand's contention about the "surrounding lands." Thailand no longer references the 1962 ICJ ruling.

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<sup>482</sup> "World Heritage List Nominations: Nomination Process," UNESCO, accessed May 12, 2011, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/nominations>.

<sup>483</sup> "UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Article 11.3" UNESCO, accessed May 10, 2011, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>.

Despite the fact that the Joint Communiqué secured various Thai prerogatives including the joint development of a management plan and the right to ongoing demarcation in the disputed areas, the issue exploded in the face of the newly ascended Samak government as the opposition parties, People's Alliance for Democracy Party (PAD) and Democrat Party, accused the pro-Thaksin government for selling out Thai interests in exchange for personal investment opportunities in Cambodia.<sup>484</sup> The UNESCO nomination was politicized to a point that the then opposition leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva told his fellow members in the parliament that "Preah Vihear is the knockout punch that could bring down Samak."<sup>485</sup>

The opposition purposely paired the Joint Communiqué to Thaksin's family selling shares of Shin Corporation, a leading Thai telecommunication company, to the Singapore government controlled Temasek Holdings in 2006. The PAD organized rally demanded the resignation of Thaksin as well as the cancellation of the 73 billion baht transaction associated with the Shin Corporation trade soon after news broke. The PAD spokesperson described the purchase as "an attempt [by Singapore] to interfere with the basic services and businesses that are sensitive to Thailand's security."<sup>486</sup> The public quickly made

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<sup>484</sup> Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "Temple of Doom: Hysteria About the Preah Vihear Temple in the Thai Nationalist Discourse," in *Legitimacy Crisis in Thailand*, ed. Marc Askew (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2010), 89.

<sup>485</sup> "Ancient Temple at Center of Debate in Thailand," *USA Today*, June 26, 2008.

<sup>486</sup> "Scrap Shin Deal or Face Boycott: Thai Activists Tell Temasek," *Bernama News Agency*, March 6, 2008.

the connection as the Cambodian Defence Minister General Teah Banh openly told the press with satisfaction that “Thaksin Shinawatra is planning large-scale investments in Cambodia with Koh Kong Province serving only as his first step in his business ventures in the country.”<sup>487</sup> Although Cambodian officials denied any linkage between the self-exiled ex-prime minister’s personal business venture in Cambodia and Phnom Penh’s intention to register Preah Vihear as World Heritage site, conflict between the yellow shirt royalists and the red shirt Thaksin supports intensified. Capitalizing on the latest development, the Thai opposition was able to fan up nationalist sentiment and exploit the discourse of “Thailand Is Not For Sale.” The Samak government and its replacement, Somchai (who is Thaksin’s brother-in-law) resigned partly due to the strong pressure from the PAD- led Yellow Shirt movement.

UNESCO’s decision to officially inscribe the temple a World Heritage Site on July 7, 2008 further escalated the domestic uproar into militarized conflicts. In his letter to the UN Security Council, the Cambodian ambassador to the United Nations reported 480 Thai soldiers crossed into the Keo Sikha Kiri Svava pagoda located in Cambodia’s territory at about 300 meters from the temple of Preah Vihear as of July 17, 2008.<sup>488</sup> Since then, retaliatory military clashes between the two armed forces have never stopped even when ceasefire

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<sup>487</sup> “Thaksin Set to Invest Big Time in Cambodia,” *The Bangkok Post*, June 19, 2008.

<sup>488</sup> “Ref: RC/MP/N-168/08,” Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the United Nations, New York, July 18, 2008, accessed April 26, 2011, [http://www.un.int/cambodia/Bulletin\\_Files/July08/Letter\\_18\\_Jul.pdf](http://www.un.int/cambodia/Bulletin_Files/July08/Letter_18_Jul.pdf).

agreements were in place. Currently, approximately 2,000 soldiers from both sides are on guard along the disputed borders.<sup>489</sup>

Thai public opinion was further divided when Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen appointed Thaksin as his economic adviser.<sup>490</sup> At the risk of irritating all ASEAN leaders, Hun Sen publicly welcomed Thaksin to take refuge in Cambodia during the 2009 ASEAN Summit held in Thailand and called Thaksin a friend who had been prosecuted unfairly for political reasons.<sup>491</sup> Hun Sen also persuaded the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to "convene an urgent meeting so as to stop Thailand's aggression."<sup>492</sup> The two countries were at the brink of severing diplomatic relations when Phnom Penh officially refused to extradite the "fugitive" should Thaksin establish residence in Cambodia. Thailand immediately recalled its ambassador from Cambodia as "the first diplomatic retaliation measure" against the Thaksin appointment.<sup>493</sup> Thai Prime Minister Abhisit also instructed all ministries to review all areas of cooperation with Cambodia.

Aside from the ongoing political bickering, it is worth noting that the two sides have been unable, perhaps unwilling, to reach a permanent truce. All ceasefires have been forged at commander level but not at the higher levels of the

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<sup>489</sup> "Thai Soldiers Wounded in Latest Clashes," *United Press International*, April 27, 2011.

<sup>490</sup> "Thaksin Appointed as Khmer PM's Economic Adviser," *The Nation*, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>491</sup> "Thaksin Shinawatra Appointed Economics Adviser to Cambodia," *The Sunday Times*, November 5, 2009.

<sup>492</sup> "Thai-Cambodia Border Fighting 'Damages' Temple," *The Bangkok Post*, February. 6, 2011.

<sup>493</sup> "Thai Envoy Recalled from Cambodia," *BBC News*, November 5, 2009.

militaries or the government.<sup>494</sup> The ASEAN brokered ceasefire earlier this year remains unimplemented as Thailand insists on Cambodia first pulling its troops and citizens out of the contested 4.6 square kilometer temple ground.<sup>495</sup> The Abhisit government asserts that Cambodia has violated the 2000 Memorandum of Understanding between Thailand and Cambodia on the Survey and Demarcation of Land Boundary (2000 MOU) by unilaterally stationing troops at the temple site. The 2000 MOU stipulates that no actions should be undertaken to affect the demarcation work on either side, especially movement of troops into disputed areas. As a precaution, the Thai government has evacuated about 7,500 villagers out of the disputed border areas, while Cambodian authorities have moved several thousand people as well.<sup>496</sup> Neither government has released the tabulated death toll nor the number wounded from both sides since the very first skirmish in mid-2008.

#### New ICJ Interpretation and New Legal Battle

Given that the dispute originated from the 1962 ICJ ruling, Cambodia went to the ICJ asking the court to clarify the status of the disputed overlapping area on April 29, 2011, with special reference to the term “vicinity of the temple.” According to a statement issued by the Cambodian Foreign Ministry, “[t]he

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<sup>494</sup> “Thai Military: Deadly Fighting Resumes at Thai-Cambodian Border,” *CNN World News*, April 29, 2011.

<sup>495</sup> “Cambodia Must Pull Out First, Insists Abhisit,” *The Nation*, May 6, 2011.

<sup>496</sup> “Thai, Cambodian Troops Clash on Disputed border, 6 Dead,” *Reuters*, April 22, 2011.

submission of this request has been prompted by Thailand's repeated armed aggression to exert its claims to Cambodian territory, on the basis of its own unilateral map that has no legal basis."<sup>497</sup> In the same application, Cambodia also asked the ICJ to instruct Thailand to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all Thai forces from those parts of Cambodian territory situated in the area of the Temple.<sup>498</sup>

While seeking legal remedies, Cambodia also asked the UN Security Council to create buffer zone in the disputed area with peacekeeping forces on site.<sup>499</sup> Judging from Cambodia's appeals to the UN Security Council, ASEAN, and now the ICJ, Phnom Penh is trying to internationalize the Preah Vihear conflict. This is a stark contrast to Phnom Penh's position on other standing territorial disputes Cambodia has with its neighbors. For example, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has been urging the parties concerned to strictly abide by the code of conduct in the South China Sea, warning against complicating the issue by unnecessarily internationalizing the discussion.<sup>500</sup>

In response, the Thai Foreign Minister held a press conference two days later regarding the latest move by Cambodia. In particular, Thailand accused

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<sup>497</sup> "Cambodia Seeks ICJ Clarification on Temple," *The Nation*, April 30, 2011.

<sup>498</sup> "Cambodia Asks UN Court to Order Thai Troop withdrawal," *Channel News Asia*, May 3, 2011.

<sup>499</sup> "Cambodia Calls for UN Buffer Zone at Thai Border," *BBC News*, February 7, 2011.

<sup>500</sup> "Cambodia Opposes to Internationalize Issue of South China Sea," *The Xinhua News Agency*, October, 28, 2010.

Cambodia of “harboring an ulterior motive.”<sup>501</sup> In Bangkok’s view, Phnom Penh has been purposely escalating the armed clashes along the border since April 22, 2011 to lay the groundwork and create an environment which it hopes would be conducive for it to go the ICJ. A Thai Foreign Minister Spokesperson reiterated the Thai resolve “to take appropriate action,” and charged Cambodia with deliberately bypassing the role of ASEAN in facilitating the bilateral process already in place. However, to best defend its interest and more importantly, to showcase Thailand’s determination to end the conflict by peaceful means, Bangkok has appointed the Thai Ambassador to the Hague and the former Director General of the Legal Department of Foreign Ministry, Veerachai Palasai, as the head of Thai legal team to act on Thailand’s behalf in the JCI hearings.<sup>502</sup> Both countries were due in court on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

#### Treading on Thin Ice: Domestic, Regional, and International

At home, Abhisit’s long time partner, the PAD, has been exerting pressure on the government for a tougher stand on the Preah Vihear issue. The Central Administrative Court’s decision to annul the Joint Communiqué under the Samak government only temporarily eased the tension on the street. The resolution was ruled unconstitutional because it violated Article 190 of the Constitution which

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<sup>501</sup> “Press Conference on Thai-Cambodian Relations and the International Court of Justice, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, accessed on May 4, 2011, <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/2642.php?id=39436>.

<sup>502</sup> “Thailand Appoints Head of Legal Team for Preah Vihear Case,” *People’s Daily*, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

requires prior parliamentary approval for any border change.<sup>503</sup> In January 2011, the PAD called for another round of “indefinite protest” in Bangkok to galvanize public opinion against the “weak” response from the government to Cambodia’s arrest of seven Thai nationalists who crossed into Cambodian territory during a border protest in December last year. The “Yellow Shirts” vowed to further intensify street protests in Bangkok after a high-profile nationalist activist was jailed for eight years in Cambodia on charges of illegal entry into Cambodia, trespassing on a military area, and spying.<sup>504</sup> PAD leader, Sondhi, on one occasion even urged the Thai military to seize Angkor Wat, the temple complex built for the Khmer King Suryavarman II in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, in exchange for the disputed Preah Vihear.<sup>505</sup> While the Cambodian premier maintained obstinately that those jailed must serve “at least two-thirds of their jail terms before being considered for royal amnesty,”<sup>506</sup> Abhisit in contrast warned PAD “not to mix up the issue of Preah Vihear dispute with the detention of the seven Thais,” and should “let the concerned officials do their jobs.”<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> “Court Annuls Samak Cabinet’s Resolution on Preah Vihear Temple and Joint Communiqué,” *The Nation*, December 31, 2009.

<sup>504</sup> “Thai Nationalists Begin Bangkok Protest Over Cambodia Dispute,” *Voice of America*, January 25, 2011; “Thai ‘Yellow Shirts’ Vow Protest After Cambodia Verdict,” *Channel News Asia*, February 2, 2011.

<sup>505</sup> “Sondhi Urges Thai Military to Seize Angkor Wat in Exchange for Preah Vihear,” *Prachatai English*, February 9, 2011.

<sup>506</sup> “No Royal Amnesty for ‘Yellow Shirt’ Activists Jailed for Espionage: Cambodian PM,” *Xinhua News Agency*, February 17, 2011.

<sup>507</sup> “PM: arrest of 7 Thais by Cambodian authorities won’t make Thailand lose territory.” MCOT Online News (English), January 7, 2011, accessed April 19, 2011, [http://www.mcot.net/cfcustom/cache\\_page/152773.html](http://www.mcot.net/cfcustom/cache_page/152773.html).



Whereas the Thai nationalists are adamant about protecting Thai sovereignty, villagers living near the Thai-Cambodian border do not share the same sentiment at all. Believing the PAD led protests at the border only aggravate the military skirmishes, villagers from Ban Phum Srol, a village about 5 kilometers from the disputed area, staged a rally to oppose further protests at the border by PAD or any Yellow Shirts. "You have created the war. You troubled us. We don't welcome you," said one village representative.<sup>508</sup> Public opinion elsewhere in Thailand concerning the conflict is surprisingly underreported as street protests in Bangkok mustered most media attention. The Preah Vihear issue appears to be an elite project centered on the various political parties and the military.

Regionally, all ASEAN leaders have expressed concerns over the ongoing military clashes on the Thai-Cambodian border. Other than the obvious loss of lives and properties caused by military confrontation, the ASEAN states are especially concerned about the organization's credibility to mediate regional conflicts and the long term implication this failure may have on other ASEAN initiated projects. Indonesia, as the current chair of ASEAN this year, has used its position to secure a peace agreement providing for Indonesia to send in a team of observers to monitor the border, but not as a peacekeeping force out of respect to both countries. In contrast to the cabinet's welcoming tone, the Thai military firmly declined the Indonesian initiative as the top brass prefers to solve the

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<sup>508</sup> "Villagers Rally to Call on PAD to Stay Away," *The Bangkok Post*, February 10, 2011.

conflict through bilateral negotiations without any third-country involvement. The Army Chief told the press that the two sides “can reach a settlement through negotiations, especially between the soldiers.”<sup>509</sup> Seeking to find a midway between the Cabinet and the military, the prime minister quickly declared in his weekly briefing segment on TV that “there is no conflict between the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the army over Thailand's refusal to accept Indonesian military observers into the disputed area,” and added that the involvement of foreign observers would only make the border situation worse.<sup>510</sup> It is widely speculated that the military has taken control over Thailand's foreign policy toward Cambodia and that the prime minister who is preoccupied with the coming election would side with the military in exchange for its electoral support.

The flat rejection by the Thai military mocks ASEAN's ability to sustain regional stability and more importantly, integrity, by mediating and reconciling intramural conflicts. No matter how willing Indonesia and other ASEAN states are to assist facilitating dialogues between the two disputing parties, the so-called ASEAN Way (an assortment of regional norms aimed at reinforcing sovereign equality through consensual decision making, non-interference, non-legally binding commitments, and voluntary enforcement of regional decisions) is actually preventing the Association from doing so. In other words, ASEAN involvement was practically brought to a halt when the Thai military vetoed the

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<sup>509</sup> “Army: Indonesian Observers Not Wanted,” *The Bangkok Post*, March 23, 2011.

<sup>510</sup> “Govt United on Border Observers, Says Abhisit,” *The Bangkok Post*, April 11, 2011.

Indonesian plan. No further ASEAN participation is possible unless it is instigated on Thailand's request, and of course, subject to Cambodian consent.

The Thai-Cambodia conflict not only tests ASEAN's ability to at the very least mediate intramural tensions, it also dampens the prospects for the much celebrated ASEAN Community Building projects scheduled to be completed by 2015.<sup>511</sup> "We always say that we're heading in the direction of creating an ASEAN Community, but our spiritual situation is not going the same way," said the executive director of the ASEAN Foundation, Makarim Wibisono.<sup>512</sup> In particular, as ASEAN members, Thailand and Cambodia have broken the long cherished Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the ASEAN Charter, both mandating timely consultation, cooperation, and commitment to peaceful means of dispute settlement at times of bilateral crisis. It is especially detrimental to the collective efforts that have been committed hitherto to the creation and maturation of a closely integrated ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). The APSC blueprint, among other things, "envisages ASEAN to be a rules-based Community of shared values and norms; a cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security."<sup>513</sup> Observers from Singapore

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<sup>511</sup> ASEAN leaders have formally adopted the blueprints for the three projects, ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Social-Cultural Community (ASCC), at the 14th ASEAN Summit on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 in Hua Hin, Thailand.

<sup>512</sup> "Cambodia-Thai Conflict Exposes Weak Link in ASEAN," *The Jakarta Post*, February 11, 2011.

<sup>513</sup> The ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint is available on the ASEAN web portal, <http://www.asean.org/18741.htm>.

also commented on how “[a]n ASEAN disunited will be taken less seriously by investors.”<sup>514</sup> Given the worsening situation at the Thai-Cambodian border, many wonder if the 2015 completion date is still realistic.

Internationally, many countries have urged the two sides to exercise utmost restraint and resume talks at the earliest date. While the UN Secretary General, Ban Kil Moon, has called for ceasefire on numerous occasions, the UN Security Council is unusually slow in responding to the worsening situation. In comparison to the Security Council’s quick reaction to the latest development on the Korean Peninsula or the Gaza Strip, the Council has withheld involvement in the Thai-Cambodia conflict. When asked about the UN’s lukewarm involvement, the council president, the Brazilian Ambassador Maria Viotti, told the press that the latest Council meeting regarding the temple conflict “was aimed at supporting bilateral and regional mediation efforts rather than involving the Council in the conflict resolution.”<sup>515</sup> The buck has been passed back to ASEAN as “[t]he idea is to work in synergy with regional efforts.”<sup>516</sup> Although it can be argued that the Council has decided to do so out of deference to the regional grouping, some council members in effect consider the fighting a bilateral issue, not one jeopardizing international security and requiring UN intervention.<sup>517</sup> Perhaps the

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<sup>514</sup> “Thai and Cambodian Troops Exchange Fire Near Ancient Temple,” *Reuters*, April, 26, 2011.

<sup>515</sup> “UN Withholds Involvement in Temple Conflict,” *The Nation*, February 15, 2011.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> “UN: Thai-Cambodia Temple Conflict is Regional Problem,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, February 14, 2011.

severity of the situation does not justify UN involvement other than eliciting “a grave concern” from the international community.

#### Thailand’s Strategic Evaluation

Cambodia’s plea to the international community has gained it much sympathy. Not only has Phnom Penh appealed for the UN Security Council to diffuse an “imminent state of war” with Thailand, it has also painted a vivid picture of constant “Thai aggression.” While Cambodia clearly favors internationalizing the temple conflict, Thailand is determined to keep the issue at a bilateral level. Whereas Thai specialists attribute domestic politics to the reasoning behind Bangkok’s calculation, the following section argues that Thai strategic culture, marked by a stronger predisposition to conflict, partly accounts for the Thai rationale for intensifying the confrontation. Although Thailand claims itself a peace loving nation, it nonetheless subscribes to a Hobbesian world view that is made ever more so real by Hun Sen’s unrelenting provocation.

#### *Suitability*

The suitability test addresses whether the chosen decision will enhance the strategic position of Thailand in the region. Thus far, Bangkok has maintained that the territorial dispute is a bilateral issue and should be peacefully resolved through bilateral and diplomatic means only. It is not necessary to obtain third-party involvement. In doing so, Thailand is actually in full compliance with the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as well as the ASEAN Charter. Both documents

place importance on the peaceful resolution of intramural conflicts through dialogue, consultation, and full commitment not to use force. In Thailand's view, it is Cambodia that is not cooperating. Abhisit openly questioned Cambodia's rationale for eschewing direct bilateral talks on the issues at hand: "Why do they need a different approach? The problem arises due to the movements of troops along the border. The talks on the border conflict and other details on the location of the observers should be handled as one package."<sup>518</sup> According to the constitution, Thai foreign policy should "promote friendly relations with other countries and adopt the principle of non-discrimination."<sup>519</sup> Bilateral frameworks and mechanisms, if effectively implemented, do serve the purported foreign policy goals.

With regard to the Thai-Cambodian border conflict, the Abhisit government has chiefly relied on two bilateral mechanisms, namely, the 2000 Memorandum of Understanding between Thailand and Cambodia on the Survey and Demarcation of Land Boundary (2000 MOU) and the Joint Boundary Commission (JBC). The JBC, established under the 2000 MOU, consist of two Co-Chairmen and other members appointed by their respective Governments. The JBC is responsible for the joint survey and demarcation of the land boundary. However, there is no official confirmation on any joint field work that has actually been carried out. Notably, in anticipation of any dispute arising out of the

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<sup>518</sup> "ASEAN Hopes for Border Resolution Lie in Tatters," *Bangkok Post*, May 9, 2011.

<sup>519</sup> "Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2550: Part 6: Foreign Policy," (Bangkok: Foreign Law Bureau, Office of the Council of State, 2007).

interpretation or application of the MOU, the memorandum stipulates that both sides should settle points of difference peacefully by consultation and negotiation. Given the worsening situation along the border, it is unclear whether the MOU or JBC has exerted any positive effect on lessening the cross-border tension.

Thailand's insistence on bilateral approaches is also a step backward from its innovative "forward engagement." According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, forward engagement is a softer and less confrontational grand strategy of Thailand's foreign policy which serves "to expand the scope of cooperation to encompass all dimensions of mutual interests as well as to forge ties with countries across the globe so as to bring about sustainable peace and economic prosperity for our purposes."<sup>520</sup> In other words, forward engagement enhances Thailand's regional and international role through "proactive" and "forward-looking" economic cooperation that in turn engenders positive spillover to other realms of collaboration. Though global in outlook, forward engagement was initially regional in scope with priorities given to greater interdependence among the Mekong states. Western values such as freedom of speech, human rights, or democratization are not prioritized. Through this grand strategy, Thailand was able to weave a web of economic cooperation that has had a great impact on Myanmar's internal development. It has also been significant in relaxing one of the regional norms, namely, non-interference of other member state's internal

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<sup>520</sup> Surakiart Sathirathai, *Forward Engagement: Thailand's Foreign Policy: Collection of Speeches by Dr. Surakiart Sathirathia* (Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, 2003), back cover.

affairs.<sup>521</sup> None of these are taking place with regard to Thai-Cambodian relations. The two sides have essentially refrained from constructively engaging each other.

### *Feasibility*

The feasibility test evaluates whether Thailand can solve the conflict through bilateral means only. A separate but related question is whether Thailand can afford to delay solving the cross-border conflict. My analysis suggests the answer is clearly no. The bilateral framework is not working because one side can simply block the other and indefinitely protract the process. In this particular case, both sides are in effect vetoing one another. The constant cross allegation of “the other side fires first” has not only prolonged the diplomatic crisis but also created confusion in the international audience. Yet, no matter which side actually fired first, the damage has already been done. Neither Thailand nor Cambodia is seen as genuine in their sincerity and commitment to solve the issue peacefully. Cambodia’s effort at internationalizing the conflict has disadvantaged Thailand, especially when the Thai military categorically rejected ASEAN mediation. The failure of bilateral approaches has created an image of Thai belligerency that is incompatible with the “peace loving nation” so often heard from King Bhumibol.

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<sup>521</sup> Ruukun Katanyuu, “Beyond Non-Interference in ASEAN: The Association's Role in Myanmar's National Reconciliation and Democratization,” *Asian Survey* 46, no. 6 (2006): 825-845.



In addition, Thailand's refusal of ASEAN involvement is a slap on the face of both the regional grouping and the incumbent chair, Indonesia. Given that the bilateral approach is failing, the contradictory positions of the cabinet and the military render outside mediation difficult as one cannot reasonably expect that any agreement made with the Thai government will be kept. In particular, Indonesia's reputation and authority as the ASEAN chair, mediator, and meeting facilitator are also undermined by the fiasco. The cordial relations developed in the past two years between the Abhisit and Yudhoyono governments may be strained. When the international community criticized steps taken by the Abhisit government and the military against "red shirt" protesters, Indonesia refrained from commenting on Thai democracy and the institutional makeup of the state. It is ironic that the Thai Ambassador to Indonesia, Thanatip Upatising, earlier expressed that "Thailand would be 100 percent behind Indonesia in many parts of international agendas... You can always count on us."<sup>522</sup>

Lastly, the seemingly endless military skirmishes at the border have greatly jeopardized peace and stability in the border area. The villages adjacent to the disputed area are the victims of all. Given that the most accessible entrance to the Preah Vihear temple is on the Thai side, villagers are able to earn a living by providing services to the tourists. Since the escalation of the military clashes in mid 2008, border crossings and the adjacent state parks were closed intermittently. Foreign embassies have also been warning their nationals to avoid

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<sup>522</sup> "RI 'Can Count on Thailand' for Support," *The Jakarta Post*, August, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010.

visiting the temple in case of open hostilities either at the temple site or in its vicinity. Resentment deepens as the villagers are increasingly impatient about the government's inability to keep the situation under control, and more importantly, increasingly infuriated as politicians continue to politicize the issue without regard to the villagers' wellbeing.

### *Acceptability*

The suitability and feasibility tests indicate the Thai insistence on solving the conflict through bilateral negotiations is unproductive. Although it is within Thailand's right to be resolute about how it prefers to engage other countries, such insistence has actually become an impediment to the solving the problem smoothly. Why, then, does Thailand continue to allow the conflict to escalate without implementing any constructive solutions?

Most observers attribute the key reason to be divided domestic politics as for Thailand's ineffective response to the conflict. On the one hand there is the ultra nationalist PAD aided by the Thai Patriots Network demanding a tougher stance against Cambodia's provocation. These groups fan nationalist fervor by politicizing the militarized conflict along the Thai-Cambodian border for more than two years. Stressing that Thailand has already lost its sovereignty over the Preah Vihear Temple, Phu Makua hill, Keo Sikha Kiri Svara pagoda and Ban Nong to its neighbor, PAD considers the government's inability to retrieve the land now occupied by Cambodia as dereliction on the part of the prime minister.

A PAD spokesperson even announced plans to lodge lawsuit against the prime minister for negligence of duties as well as to seek impeachment should it secure enough parliamentary support.<sup>523</sup>

On the other hand, there is the military taking control of the border. The Thai military has long been one of the most important actors in Thai politics. The Thai military possesses strong traditions of political intervention that have been deeply ingrained into the officer corps' worldview.<sup>524</sup> Political interventionism is justified on the ground that the military, as prescribed by the Constitution, is tasked with myriad roles and responsibilities. Among others, it is the chief protector of national sovereignty, national territory, the Monarchy, democratic institutions, and national security. Accordingly, the status of the armed forces has been elevated beyond the military arm of national defence to a principal policy decision maker. The linkage among the institution of the Monarchy, state religion and the military further accentuate the importance of the Armed Forces.

Yet, it is puzzling that as the defender of national security and sovereignty the Thai military would obstruct the diplomatic measures initiated by the civilian government to retrieve the contested land. Thai specialist, Pavin Chachavalpongpun, asserts that the dispute actually “gives the military an excellent opportunity to remain in the political limelight.”<sup>525</sup> This explains the

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<sup>523</sup> “PAD: Govt Must Regain Land Back From Cambodia,” *The Thai Financial Post*, March 7, 2011.

<sup>524</sup> Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, “Patterns of Civilian Control of the Military in East Asia’s New Democracies,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2009): 209.

<sup>525</sup> “Thai army flexes muscles ahead of election,” *The Strait Times*, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

eagerness of the military to set the course for Thai-Cambodia relations. Others observe an undercurrent of attempts by the military backed elite to create a crisis that could be used for delaying an election, one the Abhisit government finally called and scheduled to take place in early July this year<sup>526</sup>. Against the backdrop of a looming election, some analysts believe the escalating dispute is a product of conspiracy as the hawkish elements within the government and the top brass military leaders are “whipping up the nationalist fervor by provoking the fighting to show a strong hand to curry favor with hard-line voters in the upcoming poll.”<sup>527</sup> Whichever the reason, it is a win-win situation for both the government and the military to showcase patriotism and a united Thailand by not caving into Cambodian demands in particular and international pressure in general.

Conspiracy or not, the border conflict does drive public opinion in Bangkok. The loss of the temple to Cambodia represents the worst kind of “lost territory” because Siam once exercised suzerainty over its Khmer neighbor, and modern day Cambodia has always been considered a weaker state.<sup>528</sup> Criticism was directed at the prime minister when he openly “reminded” the PAD led demonstrators during a live-telecast session that Thailand had lost sovereignty over the temple by the 1962 World Court ruling under Field Marshal Sarit

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> “What is behind the latest Thailand-Cambodian conflict?” *The Telegraph (UK)*, February 7, 2011.

<sup>528</sup> Chachavalpongpan, “Temple of Doom,” 87.

Thanrat.<sup>529</sup> “We should destroy them... We are bigger and stronger, we can wipe them out... They shot at us first,” shouted one angry Bangkok resident<sup>530</sup>. The Thais are ready to go to war because ultimately, it is not about politics, not about the lost territory, but all about saving face.

Although it is difficult to translate or define the concept of face, it can be loosely understood as “respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others.”<sup>531</sup> When applied to inter-state interaction, the desire to gain face, to avoid losing face, and to save face when it is threatened can be a powerful motive steering policy makers to directions they would otherwise not have pursued. “In some instances, protecting against loss of face becomes so central an issue that it swamps the importance of the tangible issues at stake and generates intense conflicts that can impede progress toward agreement and increase the costs of conflict resolution substantially.”<sup>532</sup> The military immediately cancelled defence minister General Prawit’s trip to Phnom Penh for truce talks to protest the “false reporting” by the Cambodian media on Thai admission of defeat and loss in the latest round of military clashes in April.<sup>533</sup> Seen in this light,

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<sup>529</sup> “PM Reminds PAD Thailand Lost Preah Vihear in 1962,” *The Nation*, August, 7, 2011.

<sup>530</sup> “Opinion: The Plague of Fanaticism,” *The Bangkok Post*, February 6, 2011.

<sup>531</sup> David Yau-Fai Ho, “On the Concept of Face,” *American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 4 (1976): 883.

<sup>532</sup> Bert Brown, “Face Saving and Face Restoration in Negotiation” in *Negotiations: Social-Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Druckman (New York: Sage, 1977), 275.

<sup>533</sup> “Thailand Pulls Out of Cambodia Truce Talks,” *Agence-France Press*, April, 27, 2011.

military clashes are likely to continue along the Thai-Cambodian border as neither Hun Sen nor Abhisit can afford to lose face by granting concessions to the other.

Lastly, while most research and media reporting focus on the political and cultural value of the Preah Vihear temple, the strategic value of the temple and its surrounding 4.6 square kilometer land is rarely discussed. The temple is located on a steep cliff overlooking northern Cambodia and is about 150 miles north of the Cambodian capital. “If Thai forces can dominate Preah Vihear, or its surrounding territory on Thailand's eastern border, they would enjoy a high ground position against Cambodia, making both sides wary of each other's military forces close to the Dangrek Mountains' cliffside zone.”<sup>534</sup> The temple is a formidable fortress as both the pro-US Lon Nol Troops and the Khmer Rouge guerilla forces used the temple as the “last stand” until they were driven out.<sup>535</sup> Because of its strategic value, any change regarding the use of the temple becomes a sensitive issue to both Thailand and Cambodia. In the two letters to the UN Security Council, Abhisit expressed grave concern about the use of the temple by Cambodia for military purposes, and later the Thai Foreign Minister pointed to the military use of the temple as deplorable and in violation of international law.<sup>536</sup> It also explains why Thailand rejected the Cambodian

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<sup>534</sup> “U.S. starts war games near Thai-Cambodian clash,” *The Washington Times*, February 7, 2011.

<sup>535</sup> In May, 1975 the last remnants of the pro-US Lon Nol army were driven out of the mountain-top of Preah Vihear by the Khmer Rouge forces. The temple site was also the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge. In December 1998, the temple site was used to negotiate the surrender of the communist force.

<sup>536</sup> “Letter dated 7 February 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council,” Chargé

proposal calling for a UN buffer zone in the disputed area for fear of losing strategic and military advantage.

## Conclusion

This chapter traces the development of the Thai-Cambodian border conflicts as the events unfold. Starting from the first flare up, the conflict has continued for two and half years with an estimated death toll of 17 people and thousands of others displaced. Whether it is to protect sovereignty, salvage domestic political support, uphold military supremacy, secure strategic advantage at the border, or simply to save face, Thailand has behaved in stark contrast to the image of a “peace loving nation” and instead acted with belligerency. Diplomatic maneuvers at lessening the cross-border tension are at best on paper only. The cross allegations of “aggression” and “invasion” lead the two sides to the offensive. Although the two governments have reached a “roadmap” in the form of “a package proposal” on how to move away from bloodshed to cordiality, there is no guarantee that the two countries can work out their differences and come to a ceasefire agreement. Unfortunately, the tragedy of Preah Vihear is that political leaders have chosen to emphasize what is disputed about the temple's history rather than its potential as a "connector" between the two neighboring countries in

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d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations, accessed May 13, 2011, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Cam%20S%202011%2059.pdf>; “Statement by His Excellency Mr. Kasit Piromya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, at the United Nations Security Council, New York, February 14, 2011,” Ministry of foreign Affairs, Thailand, accessed May 13, 2011, <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/showNews.php?newsid=38609&Qsearch=cambodia>.

the form of joint cultural and economic development of the remote border regions.<sup>537</sup>

The Thai insistence on keeping the issue at the bilateral level at the expense of prolonged militarized conflict and mounting casualties is an indication of how a multilateral mechanism is perceived by the Thai strategic elite. Frankly, multilateral involvement is “unnecessary,” and far from being a norm in Thailand’s strategic calculation. The Thai behavior dampens prospects for any conceivable support to be expected from Thailand for the establishment of regional cooperative security architecture. ASEAN is also shaken by how its plan for community building might be jeopardized by militarized inter-state conflict. When it comes to sovereignty and territorial integrity, the norms of non-interference in other member states’ internal affairs actually works against ASEAN’s good intention to facilitate communication. It is an irony that after 43 years, intramural distrust still runs deep beneath the blue flag of the Association.

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<sup>537</sup> John D. Ciorciari, “Thailand and Cambodia: The Battle of Preah Vihear,” *SPICE Digest* (Palo Alto, CA: Freeman Spogli Institute for International Relations, Stanford University, Fall 2009), 3.



## Chapter 8

### CONCLUSION

Although not confronted with one single conventional threat that is destructive enough to unite the whole region, Southeast Asia today is encountering an infinite number of non-traditional security threats. These new sources of “insecurity” include, but are not limited, to terrorism, organized transnational crime, piracy, pandemic diseases, energy security, and economic security. However, as evinced by the latest Thai-Cambodian militarized confrontation over the Temple of Preah Vihear, the likelihood of conventional threats reoccurring cannot be conclusively ruled out either. It is clear that the region is experiencing an increasing degree of security interdependence that requires the attention and collaboration from all states to solve the existing and emergent security problems facing the region.

In light of the fact that it is beyond the capacity of any one state to tackle these issues alone, a cost/benefit analysis strictly from an economic standpoint would suggest that multilateral security cooperation with pooled resources in information sharing, capacity building, and the provision of equipment, technology, funding and training is deemed the most suitable policy choice for the ASEAN states. Yet, Southeast Asian states defy the conventional understanding on small state behavior. Judging from the absence of enthusiasm in speeding up the institutionalization of cooperative security, the Southeast Asian states, unlike

their European counterparts, eschew corporatist politics and instead prefer unilateral, state-centric, offense-ready security provisions.

This dissertation has explored the situation that any unilateral attempt at security seeking runs the danger of creating a security dilemma, undermining the already fragile intramural trust among the ASEAN states. Still, ASEAN members remain reluctant to see the emergence of any concrete cooperative security architecture in the region. The lack of concerted cooperative security architecture or any progress toward crafting one runs counter to the Association's vision to create a "regional security complex" as envisaged in the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint.<sup>538</sup>

#### Strategic Culture, Small States, and ASEAN

This dissertation seeks to examine the above mentioned puzzle from the premises of strategic culture. The concept of strategic culture is best understood as bounded rationality. It complements the rationality assumption but "insists that rationality must be understood within a cultural context."<sup>539</sup> Bounded rationality in this context is formed by the recurrent and patterned social arrangements that appear to subconsciously condition the world view of a state's strategic elites. Specifically, the concept explores how this world view influences their strategic

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<sup>538</sup> The 2009 APSC Blueprint is an adaptation of the 2003 ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, the 2004 Vientiane Action Programme (VAP), and relevant decisions by various ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

<sup>539</sup> Jeannie Johnson, *Strategic Culture: Refining the Theoretical Construct* (Fort Belvoir, V.A.: Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 2006), 9.

choices at the highest political level and policy options at the operational or tactical level<sup>540</sup>. Operationally, strategic culture functions as an intervening variable that affects the strategic option evaluation process. For cross-country comparison, the concept of strategic culture is approximated by numerically measuring the push and pull between two opposing forces: the propensity to conflict vs. the propensity to cooperate. The author concedes that quantitative measures for any ideational variable have limitations. It is at best an approximation of one part of the culture, strategic culture in this case. Nevertheless, numerical representation may be a useful and tangible tool for cross-country comparison. After all, it is not the absolute number generated for each country that matters but rather a comparison among these numbers. These comparisons show that small states in Southeast Asia do not emphasize multilateral security collaboration.

The primary goal of this dissertation has been to study small state strategic culture with special reference to the attitude of the ASEAN states toward institutionalizing regional cooperative security architectures. The choice of Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia is justified on the ground that they all meet the definitional requirement of objective smallness and self-perceived smallness. Moreover, the corporatist strategies practiced by their European peers in a similar environment of high security interdependence are not exhibited in these three

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<sup>540</sup> Chin Kin Wah, "Reflections on the Shaping of Strategic Cultures in Southeast Asia," in *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Security*, ed. Derek da Cunha (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), 4-5.

founding nations of ASEAN. In the quantitative case studies, computer assisted content analyses of security, defence, and foreign policies show that all three small Southeast Asian states exhibit a higher tendency for conflict. Multilateral cooperation is at best selective. Bilateral means is still the preferred policy approach when dealing with other states.

In the case of Singapore, a focus on self-reliance with minimum dependence on external partners reflects the realist perception of a Hobbeisan world where zero-sum conflict is inevitable. The discourse of survival and the analogy of a red little dot in a Malay sea reinforce each other to project a grim picture on Singapore's security environment. Dire security concerns over the lack of strategic depth and reaction time, and smallness in resources (money, manpower, and material) are further compounded by the negative spillover effect of security issues originating from neighboring states. To shore up this "regionally-based defence need," Singapore is dedicated to maintaining sophisticated forces and an "integrated warfare" doctrine with emphasis on forward and expeditionary defence capabilities in the latest round of information-led RMA. Singapore's identification with western interests does not assuage the volatile relations the country has with its neighbors either. Singapore's worst-case scenario security calculation, though often criticized as over-exaggeration by its neighbors, is amply illustrated in how the littoral state securitizes the Malacca Strait. Maritime security and navigational safety are synonymous because it is

difficult to make the distinction between piracy and terrorism as the latter may launch attacks in the guise of the former.

Three prominent situational considerations undergird the making of Thailand's security and defence policies: internally focused threat perception, developmental nationalism, and resilience of the military apparatus. Although many of the security issues are transnational in nature such as human trafficking and illicit drug trade, Thailand is more focused on addressing problems within its border. The militarized Thai-Cambodian border confrontation over the Temple of Preah Vihear and the Thai rejection of ASEAN mediation reflect one unchanging feature of international relations in Southeast Asia, namely, national sovereignty and territorial integrity are still cherished jealously among the regional states. The military's role in national development rationalizes its control of politics by elevating its status beyond the military arm of the government to the status of nation builder. Moreover, by proclaiming itself the protector of the institution of Monarchy, religion and culture, the military seeks to perpetuate and further solidify its influence in the political realm. The military's influence appears to be invincible as it is not only able to aggrandize its organizational interests, but also to vie with the central government in setting the course for Thai foreign policy, as evident in its involvement in the Thai-Cambodian confrontation.

In Malaysia's case, conceptual content analysis delineates a strategic culture leaning toward the Hobbesian end of the spectrum with a much stronger disposition to conflict than to cooperate. The need to protect its geo-economic

interests and prevent any conflict or disruption of peace from taking place on Malaysian soil have convinced Kuala Lumpur to adopt conflict prevention, apply the military doctrine of access denial, and most importantly, develop a credible air force equipped with added surveillance and early warning capabilities. The disposition to conflict is most visible in Malaysia's dichotomous worldview of big vs. small, North vs. South, West vs. East, core vs. periphery, and the developed vs. the less developed. Its self-proclaimed Third World Spokesmanship and Champion for the Islamic Community demonstrate that Malaysia will not blindly cater to foreign demands. As "a small developing country player," Malaysia can also compete with others and exercise influence in setting the international agenda. This strong stance is vividly displayed in Malaysia's determination to prevent further erosion of its maritime sovereignty even at the expense of forestalling cooperative security mechanisms that may enhance the economic well being and strategic position of the state.

Of the eight institutional categories, non-ideational factors (POLIT, MILIT, ECON, and LEGAL) weigh more heavily relative to the ideational ones (DOCTRINE, RELIG, EXPRSV, AND ACADEM) in constituting the three small states' strategic cultures. Specifically, political, military, and economic concerns trump other factors to be the more prominent drivers of Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia's security, defence, and foreign policies. Given the high degree of security interdependence in the region, a large part of the political, military, and economic concerns actually stem from the neighbors. Cross-border security issues

such as contraband trade, small arms trafficking, and extremist movements are high on each government's agenda. These states are also confronted with "everyday security challenges" such as the government's domestic legitimacy, social unrest, and separatism both within its border and in the neighborhood. Although the challenges are primarily domestic, these may weaken state capacity in the long run if left unaddressed. More importantly, "everyday security challenges" have the potential to spill over and affect countries nearby.

These concerns are exacerbated by a heightened sense of vulnerability of being a small state, differences in regime type, and more importantly, lingering intramural suspicion based on past grievances. Yet, all three governments are less inclined to devise multilateral mechanisms that are conducive to solve trans-boundary security challenges. Although the ASEAN states are nominally united vis-à-vis external powers, the qualitative case studies on the evolving maritime security regime in the Malacca Strait demonstrates that extra-regional powers are not only invited by Singapore to hedge against other extra-regional powers such as China, but more importantly, for Singapore, extra-regional security partners provide political backing vis-à-vis the other two littoral states.

#### The Prospects of the ASEAN Political and Security Community

In an effort to strengthen regional integration and ASEAN centrality in regional cooperation, The Declaration of the ASEAN Bali Concord II establishes an ASEAN Community scheduled to be completed by 2020. The Community

comprises three pillars, namely, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Recognizing the imperative for a regional architecture for comprehensive security, the ASEAN leaders decided at the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in the Philippines to accelerate the community building project by 2015. Three documents are particularly pertinent to the realization of the APSC: The ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, the Vientiane Action Programme (VAP), and the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint. While the Plan of Action lays out the principles to realize the objectives of APSC, the VAP identifies the measures to be taken in 2004-2010, and the Blueprint provides a roadmap and timetable for the activities needed to accelerate the establishment of the APSC by 2015<sup>541</sup>.

Broadly, the APSC is built around three key characteristics. First, the APSC is to be a rule-based community of shared values and norms. The Plan of Action specifies that any norm or value setting activity must not deviate from the six fundamental principles: 1) non-alignment; 2) fostering peace-oriented attitudes among ASEAN members; 3) conflict resolution through non-violent means; 4) renunciation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD); 5) avoidance of arms race in the region; and lastly, 6) renunciation of the threat or

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<sup>541</sup> “ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action,” Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Nov. 29, 2004, accessed May 12, 2011, <http://www.aseansec.org/16826.htm>; “Vientiane Action Programme,” ASEAN, Nov. 29, 2004, accessed May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.aseansec.org/VAP-10th%20ASEAN%20Summit.pdf>; and “ASEAN Political Security community Blueprint,” ASEAN, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, accessed May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.asean.org/5187-18.pdf>.



the use of force. These principles largely resonate with the assorted regional norms commonly known as the ASEAN Way. Yet, the explicit call for fostering peace-oriented attitudes lays bare the fact that such “attitudes” are not widely shared among ASEAN member states. If peace-oriented attitudes are not the predominant norms in the region, the default policy instrument for conflict resolution may stray from peaceful means. In a security environment of deep intramural distrust, the renunciation of the threat or the use of force may not be easily achieved as member states continue to hold onto their sovereign rights to pursue their individual foreign policies, strategic postures, and defence arrangements.

Second, the APSC shall be a cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region with shared responsibility for comprehensive security. The concept of comprehensive security “goes beyond the requirements of traditional security but also takes into account non-traditional aspects vital to regional and national resilience, such as the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions of development.”<sup>542</sup> Central to the development of this cohesive, peaceful, and stable community is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) process in support of APSC. The Blueprint identifies the need to strengthen the necessary institutional framework within the ARF for conflict prevention, confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy, and post-conflict peace building. The ARF Experts and Eminent Persons readily admitted in their first meeting in 2006 that “[d]espite its

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<sup>542</sup> “ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint,” 8.

progress, the ARF lacks some of the institutional structure and cohesion among members to respond effectively to regional security concerns and challenges.”<sup>543</sup>

According to Rodolfo Severino, the Secretary-General of ASEAN from 1998 to 2002, not all ARF participants share the view that the “forum” should be upgraded to “an institution of implementation.”<sup>544</sup>

While it is widely acknowledged that the ARF has not moved forward from its initial confidence building phase to the development of preventive diplomacy, there are divergent views on the actual success of the ARF in dispelling mutual suspicions among the participants. Other than its slow pace in promoting mutual confidence, the Paper on the Review of the ARF also points out several functional deficiencies of the Forum that are in need for improvement. ARF participants agreed in 2008 to adopt the recommendations from the Review, including “the need to strengthen the role of all ARF participants; enhance practical cooperation; maintain the moratorium on membership; focus on concrete areas of cooperation; enhance the role of the ARF Chair and the ARF Unit... and improve the ARF's operating mechanisms.”<sup>545</sup> Most importantly, ARF has to become an “action-oriented” body before it can competently fulfill the operational

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<sup>543</sup> “Co-chair’s Summary Report of the Inaugural Meeting of the Experts and Eminent Persons, the ASEAN Regional Forum, Jeju Island, 29-30 June 2006,” *The ASEAN Regional Forum Documents Series 1994-2006* (Jakarta: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2006), 440, accessed May 24, 2011, <http://www.aseansec.org/publications/ARF06-09.pdf>.

<sup>544</sup> Rodolfo C. Severino, *The ASEAN Regional Forum* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 113-4.

<sup>545</sup> “Chairman’s Statement of the 15th ASEAN Regional Forum, Singapore, 24 July 2008,” ASEAN, accessed June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, <http://www.asean.org/21781.htm>.

arm of the APSC. Functional deficiencies notwithstanding, the Forum is after all the only venue inclusive enough to accommodate different, sometimes clashing, security interests, strategic calculations, and threat perceptions among regional and extra-regional participants. The maturation of the APSC depends greatly on the institutionalization of the ARF. Yet, the lack of consensus on the pace and extent of institutionalizing the Forum demonstrates that confidence building in the ARF is still far from completion, let alone being the supporting mechanism of the APSC.

Lastly, the APSC is to be a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world. The ultimate goal of the APSC is to “ensure that the people and Member States of ASEAN live in peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic, and harmonious environment.”<sup>546</sup> Although a consolidated APSC aims to bring regional political and security cooperation to a higher plane, ASEAN is careful to emphasize that the Community is by no means a defence pact, military alliance, or a joint foreign policy consortium. Yet, the Plan of Action stipulates that to better address future security challenges, “ASEAN Member Countries share the responsibility for strengthening peace, stability and security of the region free from foreign military interference in any form or manifestation”. In other words, the region must retain a nominal unity, however illusive, to fend off external intervention even when intramural relations are volatile.

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<sup>546</sup> “ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint,” 1.

Overall, the three qualitative case studies paint a rather bleak and pessimistic picture of the APSC completion by 2015. Whilst observers are sanguine about how genuine operationalized cooperative security may result from the current Malacca Strait Patrol arrangement, underneath the veil of cooperation is a strong sense of intramural rivalry among the three littoral states. The Thai refusal of ASEAN intermediation in its militarized border conflict with Cambodia and the latest diplomatic flare up between Vietnam and China with Hanoi conducting live-fire naval exercises all challenge ASEAN's ability to mitigate tensions, prevent disputes from arising, or enforce pacific settlement of disputes between/among member states. Without a central institution, the APSC is at best another addition to the multitudes of well-intended, yet unoperationalized, security arrangements in the region. At its current stage, the APSC appears to be a policy instrument created only to reinforce ASEAN's centrality in charting the region's security architecture. In itself, this is no small accomplishment.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mily Ming-Tzu Kao was born in Taipei, Taiwan. She moved to Canada with her family when she was fourteen years old. In 1998, Mily entered the University of Toronto, double majoring in Political Science and East Asian Studies. Upon graduation, she moved to New York and attended the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University for her Master's degree in East Asian Studies. While completing her Master's thesis, Mily interned at the New York branch of Mainichi Newspaper, a leading Japanese press, as an assistant reporter. With a strong desire to sharpen her Japanese language skill, she moved to Japan in 2004 and attended the Study in Kyoto intensive language program offered by Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan. She subsequently passed the National Japanese Proficiency Test, Level one, in February 2005. In August 2005, Mily returned to the United States and entered the Graduate College at Arizona State University to pursue a doctorate in Political Science. She received research assistantship from the School of Politics and Global Studies from 2005-2010 and the Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship in her last year of doctoral study.